The Methodist Pulpit

The Living Word

Rev. A. H. Tuttle, D. D.

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By

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FOREWORD

THESE sermons are published almost precisely as they were preached extemporaneously. After making a few syntactical corrections, they are given to the merciless accuracy of the type.

Every sermon had a specific and local purpose, which determined its form; and they all bear the marks of hasty preparation, inseparable from a busy pastorate. Whatever may be said of their thought-forms—such as analyses, language, and illustrations—the material and spirit were undoubtedly absorbed from contact with books and kindred minds, and so inwrought into the preacher's own as to make it impossible for him to discriminate and say, "This is mine," and "That is thine." But what matters it, when our supreme aim is to gather from every possible source that which is his "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption?" Praying that the same Spirit which accompanied the spoken word may breathe in that which is written, we send it out into "the ever-living, ever-working universe," where it will go beyond the power of recall.

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I.

THE LIVING WORD.

"But the word of the Lord endureth forever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."—1 Peter i, 25.

A WORD is the expression of a thought. That is the chief use of words, to carry ideas. So the word of the Lord is God's thought put in language.

God has more than one way of giving us his thoughts. His works reveal them. His providences, his Holy Spirit, his Son, all are revelators of the Divine mind. But in order to definiteness of thought, speech is required. It is a necessity of our infirmities. We must speak in words, else what we call our thoughts are only vague impressions, which are apt to evaporate in feelings. So God gives us definite conceptions of his great thought by casting it in the form of speech: "Thus *saith* the Lord." But we can readily understand how that a living word takes coloring from a locality. The same word

spoken at widely-separated places will carry ideas very unlike. The same is true as to time. A sentence spoken a hundred years ago will not necessarily convey the same meaning as spoken now. Such is the effect of time and place on a living tongue.

If, then, God is to give us his word unchangeable, which will carry his thought uncorrupted everywhere and on to the end of time, he must give us a literature unique. It must be the product of life; that is, the natural outgrowth and expression of the thought and life of the people. Then, before it has lost its life, it must take inflexible, irrefragable form. That is equivalent to saying that God's revelation must be not only a historic, but also a linguistic miracle. And that *is* the miracle of this worded thought of God, the Bible. For in the sense that he has purposely thrown his thought into it, the Bible is "the Word of the Lord."

Let us at this time consider the two things named in our text: the first relating to the form of God's Word, the speech in which it is cast; and the second relating to its substance, "the gospel which is preached unto you," studying them more especially in their bearing on its perpetuity: "It endureth forever."

I. THE UNCHANGEABLE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD in the world is conserved by the remarkable history of the tongues in which he has placed his saving truth.

The relation of the verbal forms of the Bible to the providential unfolding of the gospel, and its incorruptible continuance in an ever-changing human history, is often remarked by Biblical scholars. We, however, know of no attempt to state the fact in popular form. But it is a fact so vital to faith, and so magnifies the wisdom of God in the making of his revelation, that we venture to gather, from the archives of the learned, four facts for those who are not familiar with the original languages of the Scriptures.

1. *The Hebrew in which the Old Testament is written was the natural language of revelation* in the time of the infancy and childhood of God's people, while he was instructing them in the first principles of salvation; but would prove utterly inadequate for them in the time of their maturity. It was certainly not the original speech of the human race, as has been popularly supposed, but was the Shemitic dialect of the Palestinian seaboard. It arose from the meeting and attrition of the various Shemitic invasions, Babylonian, Aramaic, and Ara-

bic. It was spoken by all the peoples of the coast, Phenician, Philistine, Canaanite, and Israelite, each nation having its patois, but not so variant as to make intercourse with each other difficult. Before it had hardened into the artificial product of reflection and scholastic effort, the Israelites received it and made it palpitate with their own fresh life and thought. Doubtless other tongues could have been so used; but it was this, the latest and the least characteristic of the Shemitic dialects, that was employed, while it was yet in its forming stage, to take the impression of God's truth. To borrow Dr. Palmer's figure, "While the pigments were still damp, Divine revelation was laid on the surface of each word."

There could be no tongue better fitted to image ideas when thought was forming. Its words are taken from familiar things, to picture and suggest the otherwise unfamiliar. An eminent Hebraist has described the Hebrew dictionary as "a splendid picture-gallery, upon whose walls are hung the most beautiful paintings. Into the tapestry of the language are woven forms of exquisite grace and landscapes of surpassing loveliness." To illustrate, would you find a word to mean and suggest power, the Hebrew gives you *horn* or *hand,* only pictures

of power, they being the instruments of strength in the ox and the man. So the word that means happiness is *sunshine.* How suggestive! Justice is *cut* or *divide,* the word being taken from the habit of the hunters, after the hunt, of dividing the fruits of the chase in strictest impartiality. Adam means *red clay,* describing the material out of which he was formed. The word to designate spirit is *breath.* Thus the atmosphere of the Hebrew speech is that of the kindergarten. And it was after the methods of that school that God trained his people in the sublime doctrines of his holiness.

Walker, in his remarkable work on "The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation," has well illustrated for us how that, if God would unfold a plan of salvation for guilty men, he must employ terms that denote general conceptions; such as *sin, redemption, repentance, regeneration,* and *holiness.* But these terms are utterly without significance until the true spiritual import has been put into them. Hence God began and carried on an education process. By taking up certain suggestive symbols and ceremonies, through them he created the idea; and then fastened the idea to some suggestive word, and passed it down the ages. The picturesque speech which God employed was perfectly adapted to his

purpose as he trained his elect people in the principles of redemption. While the clay was yet soft, he impressed upon it the stamp of his ideas, and it became the depository of the sacred oracles. Then, just when the ceremonial method of instruction had achieved its purpose, and the Hebrew speech was rich with Divine truth, by a series of historical events which we can not but regard as providential, it ceased to be used in common intercourse. The clay became hard, holding the impression of God's mind.

It may be true, as Professor T. C. Murray affirms, that we do not have the sacred literature of the Jews in its original form, but that certain post-exilic scholars fashioned the oldest and most recent documents into precisely similar grammatical and literary shape. But neither this nor any other critical handling has altered, nor can alter, its essentially Divine character. Like the transparent amber, it holds, unchanged and in perfect clearness, that which God placed within it.

2. *In the meanwhile another language was forming,* requiring ages for its perfection, and by a process of culture which was impossible for the Hebrews while they were training in holiness; a language which was not so well fitted to express the

thought of the world's childhood, but which its manhood would require.

That wonderful Greek nation has wonderfully enriched the world with its art, its philosophy, its literature; but its most valuable gift to men is its language. Confessedly it has never been equaled. "In the fullness of its vocabulary, in the variety of its connective particles, in the richness of its grammatical forms, and, above all, in its power of combining words as thought seeks emphasis of expression, the Greek language stands as the prince of tongues." Dr. Harman, of Dickinson College, himself a master of the tongue, used often to cry out in his enthusiasm, "Greek is spoken in heaven." However that may be, it was the dominant language in the fullness of time predicted by the prophets. Into this tongue God poured the rich treasures of his truth, which had been imaged in the old economy, but which here found direct expression.

Can we say that it was a mere coincidence that, just when the Gospel was ready for its final statement, there was the perfect speech to receive it? Then there is another coincidence to explain: that this speech which never could have come to such perfection, except within the limits of a very narrow

territory, should just at that time be the literary speech of the world. At that time, if any one would tell his story to all nations, he must tell it in Greek. Explain this triple coincidence, where the prophet and the historian stand so close together. As sure as there is a dominating purpose running with sovereign might through all history, all this was of God, who was preparing his gospel for the world.

3. And now I reach a point which I have been steadily approaching, and where I wish to throw especial emphasis. It is a most marvelous fact and one so necessary to the preservation of God's thought in speech, that I can not look upon it as otherwise than a part of the Divine plan. Almost immediately after these tongues had become enriched by God's revelation, *they ceased to exist as living languages.*

We can readily see the force of this fact. We know how that all living languages are in a state of change. Words do not retain the meanings they once had. Some get degraded; others take a different shade of thought; others become obsolete; others come to mean the exact opposite of their original meanings.

We have an illustration in our own English. The language has so changed as that we can not

read the ancient English classics without the aid of a glossary. Suppose that your only access to God's thought was in Wyclif's Bible! You could hardly read it. Even if you could, your very reading would degrade your view of the Divine testimonies, and would require constant explanations. Think of reading "Jacob had twelve *brats,* among whom was Joseph." Think of Elisha, in that sublime hour when Elijah went up in a whirlwind, crying, "My dad, my dad, the cart of Israel and the horses of it!" In the lapse of half a millennium, Wyclif's terms so full of dignity and beauty when he used them to robe God's thought, have become tattered and soiled and cast aside for homlier uses.

The same may be said of Tyndale's and other translations. As an example, a later version makes the great apostle, say, "Paul, the *rascal* of God and the *villain* of Jesus Christ." It was a very truthful voicing of Paul's thought in that age; for *villain* was an old English word which meant the humblest servant, and *rascal* meant the most needy one of the flock. And that is just what Paul would say, that he was the most humble of Christ's slaves and the most needy.

The changes that are constantly occurring in a living speech are sure to veil the ancient truth. Only

a skillful scholar can lift the curtain and disclose the glory of the Lord. Men have long known that even our accepted version was obscuring rather than revealing many portions of God's truth; and so a new version was required.

It is easy for us to see, then, how that when God has once worded his thought, in order to preserve it in its purity, the word itself must be unchangeable. In the most literal sense, "The word of the Lord must endure forever." Now, that has been done in the passage of these tongues into dead languages. When the fire of God's thought heated the carbon, lo! it crystallized into a hard, fixed diamond, which flashes forever the light of the altar and the throne. To borrow the strong speech of an eminent linguist:

"God has stamped the likeness of his own unchangeableness upon the record of his own purposes and thoughts. Men may deny or refuse, or misconstrue, his testimony; but they can not add to it, nor take from it. God has locked up the record in the archives of his own providing, and has taken the key into his own possession."

Thus it has come to pass that while other traditions, which at their time commanded great attention in the world, have become completely eroded

by the surges of time, the Word of the Lord stands like the rock of ages, bearing aloft the Gospel.

4. Another fact should be stated in this connection, though the purpose of our meditation forbids its discussion: I mean the *providential preservation of the sacred text through the mutations of time*.

Recall the frequent and persistent and venomous persecutions which those who cherished the Bible have suffered. What people ever drank such a cup of woe as those who held in their memories and their hearts the heavenly oracles! They have been enslaved, tortured, slain. Their books have been burned, and the bodies of their slain rabbis cast in the ditch. Thus men thought to obliterate "the pestiferous literature." But still they lived, and with them the memory of their Holy Book. It is a miracle of the ages—a continuous crucifixion and a continuous resurrection.

Akin to this was the early persecution of the Christians. For three centuries, with brief intermissions, the Christian Church held the documents of their hope against appalling perils; and thousands of them sealed their faith with their blood. But through it all, the Word continued to abide. Recall the long ages of dank ignorance and superstition, in which the Book lay neglected. What oc-

curred in the times of Tischendorf, who discovered the monks of Sinai kindling an evening fire with the precious leaves of the *Codex Sinaiticus,* was for many ages a common occurrence. The wonder is that all traces of the written Word had not been obliterated. But here it is, with documentary and historical proofs sufficient to convince the Christian scholar that no fragment of the Word of the Lord is lost. Out of the flames *it abideth.* Recall the efforts of many ages to pervert the Word. Unable to obliterate the record or shake our faith in its genuineness and authenticity, men have sought to corrupt it. They would make it out a fable or a myth. With critical acumen, they would confuse our minds with questions of history and literature, and so create for it an atmosphere as unlike its own as that of the factory is unlike that of the garden. But notwithstanding all this, the human heart, in its best hours, hears here not the rattle of intellectual machinery, but the voice of the Lord God, which speaks to us with an authority that is entirely independent of all critical scholarship. The Scriptures, like Eden's garden, pour fourth four streams to water and refresh all the earth. In the face of nearly every natural reason for its obliteration, the Word of the Lord abideth. It is a supernatural Book, having a super-

natural history, and accomplishing supernatural results in every heart that receives it.

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF GOD'S WORD.

Thus far I have spoken only of the *form* of God's Word. However important that may be, its chief value is its substance, the truth it embodies. And that, according to Peter, is "the gospel which is preached unto you."

1. What the apostle here affirms is, that *the gospel is not a new thing in the world*, but the one great thought that God had from the first. It is not merely the utterance of the New Testament, but is voiced in the Old. It is the theme of the entire Book. Peter makes a large quotation from Isaiah lx, which is a clear prediction of the coming of the Messiah and the accomplishment of his great work. In the very first chapter of his epistle, he recognizes the substance of all prophecy to be our salvation in Christ: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that

not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter i, 10-13.)

The one supreme idea carried on God's speech is redemption. It was in God's mind from the beginning. For reasons that are evident, its unfolding has been gradual and progressive; yet from eternity the thought has been unchangeable. "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has chosen us in him from before the foundation of the world."

There never was a time in all the past, when the Gospel was not mapped out definitely in the mind of God, as the plan of a cathedral is wrought in the mind of the architect before the first stone is laid; and there never will be an instant in the undeveloped future when it will be changed. Every epoch in history has been found to be in perfect conformity with the original draft. And when at last the headstone is brought with shoutings, "Grace, grace be unto it!" new as it may seem to those who

have not the vision of the eternal, in every detail, it is only the old, old thought with which Eternal Love began the redemption scheme. The New Jerusalem coming down from heaven is the old city of God.

2. Another reason that Peter gives for the everlasting perpetuity of the Word is, *it is a seminal principle, and has the power of self-propagation.*

He speaks of those to whom he writes as being "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of the word of the Lord, that liveth and abideth forever." And this is in perfect accord with the teaching of the Book throughout. Paul calls it "the word of life." (Phil. ii, 16.) James says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." (James i, 18.) It was on the word that the dying Savior relied for the sanctification of his people. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John xvii, 17.) He said of his own utterance, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." (John vi, 63.)

Augustine says that what Jesus meant by this statement was, that he taught spiritual truth in distinction from historical or scientific truth. But there is certainly a larger meaning than that in this strong utterance. He

makes his words not merely the carriers of spiritual truths, but they bear somewhat of the very spirit that created them. Otherwise he would have said, "My words are spiritual;" but he says, "My words are *Spirit,*" and "It is the *Spirit* that giveth life." This carries our mind back to that creative act by which man became a living soul. "And God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." I do not alter its sense, but rather unfold it when I read it, "And God breathed into his nostrils the *Spirit,* which giveth life." The Creator projected his own Spirit into the highest creature, and it walked forth in the image of God, no longer *it,* but *he;* not simply the crown of creation, but the offspring of God, a son. Now, what Moses affirms of the breath of God, Jesus affirms of his words. "They are Spirit." They carry the might of his own personal self into the receptive heart.

Mystery indeed is that power by which one spirit can project itself into another; but it is a common fact of daily life. See that fever-troubled child, rocked in the arms of its mother, who softly sings the lullaby:

"Mother sings thy cradle song,
And the angels hither throng,
While the stars gleam overhead,
Watching round thy humble bed
Lullaby, lullaby,
Sing lullaby."

A great restfulness enwraps the child, like the gathering shades of evening. He sleeps. What was it that calmed the child? Superficially, the lullaby; but more truly the great calm of the mother heart. She projected, through her song, her own very life into the heart of her child. Thus by the might of that ascendency which a nobler mind exerts over those of weaker mold, one of positive commanding character can, and does, cast his own thought, peace, joy, will, into the inner life of others. They live by his life. And one of the chief conduits of this flow of life from one to another is speech. Words are the forces of life. Thus when Jesus speaks, he not only gives us his thought, but he projects somewhat of himself to the heart that receives it. Whoever believes the words of Jesus, appropriates and assimilates them, really inhales the life of God, and, like the first man, becomes "a living soul."

What we have said of the Word of Jesus, is true of the entire Scriptures. We live by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Here we have not only what God spoke in former days, but what he would say to us now. There is this supernaturalness about this Book: it has the power of a personal presence and a direct personal address. It picks us out from all others, and speaks

to us in such a way as to force the conviction that it means *me*. It speaks to us as Jesus spoke to the woman at the well, telling us "all things whatsoever I did." It rebukes, approves, alarms, encourages, according to our personal need.

Notice the force of these words in controversy. They silence argument, not by an appeal to the intellect, but by an address to the inward sense, which, by force of its intuitive assent, compels the intellect. The godly but illiterate man will confound the skeptic just by quoting the inspired words. Notice their power, when aptly quoted, to soothe the suffering heart, like the touch of a loving hand. Their power is even more effective when read directly from the sacred page; for it is then, not merely a message, but is immediately from the "mouth of the Lord."

Notice how marvelously fruitful they are. Every time we turn to them, they are fresh. After deep experiences, they are richer and fuller of meanings than when they first came to our hearts. They outrun our swiftest speed. They are inexhaustible. Volumes of sermons may be preached from a single text. The wisest sages, the holiest saints, here have their feet only in the surf, while the billows roll away off into the infinities.

Notice their saving power. Have you ever

struggled in vain to guide an inquiring spirit, and then, after an earnest prayer, just echoed some of these God-spoken words? What a miraculous effect has been produced! Did you ever know a soul profoundly awakened who had not been roused by something from the Book? Did you ever know of a soul converted, that had not been especially aided by Scripture language? These words have a Divine power to quicken. They awaken heavenly ideals. They have a grappling affinity for all the moralities in domestic and political and social life.

I would not idolize the letter; yet there is a nameless power in the sentence that follows, "Thus saith the Lord." The secret of it is *God is in it.* Just as truly as you put yourself in your speech, God is in his Word. Hence "it endureth forever." We have no need to become alarmed over the attempts of men in these days to destroy this Word. That has been the effort of untruth in all the ages. But still it is here with the breath of eternity, speaking out as triumphantly as ever "the Gospel." Men have thought to hush this Word, and lay it away in a sepulcher sealed and guarded. But on the morning of the third day, forth it comes with the cry, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

III. THE PRACTICAL LESSONS TO DRAW FROM THESE FACTS ARE:

1. *Feed your own life with the Word.* We greatly bemoan our weakly religious life. There are so many of us who are lacking in bone and muscle. We impress men with the fact that we are good and weak. Our religion runs into emotion, sentiment, and is wanting in manly power. That can be remedied by better feeding. Here is the true food: "Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Make the Scriptures your own. Learn what they mean. Get their parts. Then link them together. Become master of the one great thought of the Book,—God's redemption in Christ, the Gospel. That will make us not only strong, but evergreen—"trees planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf also shall not wither."

2. *Preach the Word.* (1 Tim. iv, 2.) We are living in a time when this injunction of the apostle is especially needed. It is a time of strong reaction from the meditative and devotional spirit which characterized other ages. Not holiness, but usefulness, is the watchword. Our aspiration is not so much *to be as to do.* The ideal Christian is not the prophet, coming with face aglow from the Mount of God, but the armored soldier on the gory

field. The factory is taking the place of the altar. Organization is supplanting inspiration. There never was a time when enterprises of religious activity were so multiform as to-day. Societies, associations, unions, federations, leagues, asylums, hospitals, missions, are multiplied, divided and subdivided, belted and manned, *ad infinitum*. O! Wheels! The voice of praise is dulled in the rattle of machinery. The incense of prayer is lost in the smoke of the factory. What we dread is not the fact that these many forms of Christian work exist. They all had their spring in the love of Christ, and are helping to make the burden of life bearable. What we dread is the false ideal which this fact is creating; namely, that the useful rather than the devout man is the typical Christian. It reverses the Divine order, and, unless there is a speedy retroaction will result in an utter secularizing of piety. We are not created by good works into Jesus Christ, but "we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works." They are the fruit, not the root, of the Divine life.

Our remedy for any threatening evil in this particular is to keep the garden of the Lord copiously watered with the streams of life, God's Word.

3. *Finally, remember that, in so far as we get the Word, we get that which lasts.* Everything else perishes. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of men as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever."

Does that mean hereafter? Why not? Truth existed as a fact in the Divine mind before it was spoken, just as the rivers exist in the clouds before they pour down the hills; and as they flow on to the ocean, and then are caught up on the arms of light back to the sky, so truth, dropping from the lips of the eternal, flows like rivers of life through time, then sweeps round back into God. So taught the Oriental mystics. It is only another way of saying truth flows from eternity to eternity. O, who would not move on this majestic current? It carries us up into Him "who was and is, and is to come."

II.

WARRING NATURE.

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."—Isa. xi, 6.

I BELIEVE, with most of our commentators, that the prophet here describes what is actually to occur among the beasts of the forest and the field, in the time of man's spiritual regeneration. The triumph of the Spirit in the world will be shared by all creation. As Paul also teaches, all these conflicting elements in the natural world, whether animate or inanimate, will be brought into perfect peace. "In that day there will be nothing to hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain." I, however, do no violence to the passage, but only follow the example of the apostles, and of Jesus himself, in considering it as a symbol of what is occurring in our own personal life by the power of the gentle Christ. And this spiritual fact is only the prelude of the natural.

I. THE CONFICT WITHIN.

1. *Every man finds all these animals in himself:* The snarling wolf, the blood-thirsty leopard, the ravenous lion; beasts with fangs and claws; crawling, stinging, and hissing things; every ugly brute in the world,—all are here in us, a part of our nature. On the other hand, all the kindly animals are here: the gentle lamb, the timid kid, the laborious ox. And here, too, are the humming bee, the cooing dove, and the celestial nightingale.

2. *These elements do not harmonize.* We cannot make these animals live together in peace. The wolf hunts the lamb; the leopard thirsts for the blood of the kid; the lion rends the ox; the serpent charms the bird to its death. This is bad enough in the animal world, where every brute has its natural protection; but when it all occurs right here in our own breast, where we are both the devourer and the devoured, it is torment indescribable.

We have seen a man with a loving heart, tearing his hair because he had done a hateful thing to the one he most loved. We have seen a generous man crawling away in selfish greed. We have seen a truthful man smarting under the scourge of his own lie. We have seen men rushing into shameful excesses which they loathed.

3. *This anomalous fact has its powerful representation in literature.* Hawthorne impersonates Egotism as poor Roderick Elliston carrying in his bosom an enormous green reptile, with an ice-cold length of body, and the deadliest poison in his sting. It ate into and absorbed his very being. It stung him when he thought of a brother's excellence, and gave him pleasure when calamity overtook a friend. It awakened a preternatural insight into others' defects, which he delighted to expose. It turned his face into a sickly green, mingling with his natural deadly white. It put poison into his breath, and turned his speech into a revolting hiss. He was a crawling, shuddering thing. That was bad enough; but what made it worse was, that, wedded to this repulsive thing, was sweet love. One might be content to be just a serpent; but to be both a serpent and a dove, is to writhe in the Inferno of contention.

Stevenson's "Strange Story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" is not so strange to us, for the two men of diverse characters are both present in us, joined in a mystery of one personality. With far more searching insight than Stevenson does Edgar Allan Poe represent this same antagonism in "William Willson," who was constantly encountering a gen-

tler man of the same name, and with a manner and voice which were wondrously like his own, yet as unlike as sanctity is unlike depravity. This namesake dogged his steps, thwarted his purposes, dashed the evil cup from his lips, and intruded upon every critical hour with an uplifted finger of warning. Tormented by this impertinent intrusion, William, on one occasion, drew his rapier and thrust his gentle double through and through. The dying man uttered these awful words: "Henceforth art thou also dead—dead to the world, to heaven, and to hope! In me didst thou exist; and in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly *thou hast murdered thyself.*" All of which is in full accord with Paul's powerful picture of the moral perversion and degeneration of a soul divided against itself.

Dr. W. L. Watkinson tells us of how some misguided scientists have recently succeeded in producing what he calls a diabolical fad. By grafting a portion of one insect on the body of another, they have made new organisms in which are conjoined beings of directly opposite natures—miserable creatures, with the clash of irreconcilable impulses, and instincts that tear each other! The doctor imagines a spider-butterfly, with "a passion for the sunshine

and a love for darkness, with a longing for roses and a thirst for blood, demanding inconsistent satisfaction; the creature perplexed within itself, afraid of itself, devouring itself."

Yet here is that selfsame thing in us. We are that spider-butterfly. "The thing that I would, I do not: . . . I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I find a law in my members warring against the law of the spirit of my mind." That is the antagonism. We are in a hopeless struggle with a monster that cleaves to us, and from which we can not extricate ourselves because it is a part of ourselves. That is the dreadful "body of death" which Paul pictures, and which we recognize as our very own.

4. *What is true of ourselves is true of every one else;* true of the individual, and true of the collective body. We are a race majestic above all things else, so that God himself bends down over us in infinite tenderness; yet so out of adjustment with ourselves that we can not live in peace with each other without armies and navies, and police, and locks and bars, and constant watchfulness. "We fight and devour one another." We have read of how some learned Frenchmen once aspired to make a fabric of wonderful delicacy. They would weave

the threads of the spider-web into a cloth softer than the down of an angel's wing. They collected thousands of spiders, and placed them in a dark room, with flies to feed them, and then left them to do their weaving. Some weeks later they went to note the result; and but one spider was left. They had fought each other till at last the one spider king was sovereign of the lonely realm.

That is the way we would weave our white robes; only, because of the nobler nature in us, we foresee the dire result and place defenses about us in officers and prisons. To the spider is joined the archangel in man.

II. PEACE RESTORED.

The prophet assures us that the conflict will cease. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

1. *Not by the destruction of the faculties or pas-*

sions that have brought us into this distress. That is the way by which governments have sometimes sought to relieve the country from the ravages of wild animals. They offer a price for the heads of slain bears, wolves, and other beasts, and thus exterminate them. It is thought, however, by many philosophers, that by that process we eliminate elements that are really needed for the health of Nature. To rid the world of wild animals may be the only practicable good at the present time; but it is by no means the ideal condition.

However that may be in the natural world, we know that the method of destruction has proven a hopeless failure in the realm of spirit. Honest men have bravely sought to destroy their base passions by desperate methods. What a pathetic story is that that is told of the hermits, the Carthusians, the Penitentes, and others who have sought holiness by the torture and ruin of the fleshly appetites! Such efforts have been as vain as those of the priests of Baal on Carmel, who cut themselves with knives to command the attention of their god. The heavenly fire does not come by any such methods. It is all a failure. By taking themselves out of the world, men become the subjects of painful illusions, and brutish stupefactions, and insane passions, worse than those

they sought to destroy. The man who, crazed by the discovery of the leprous spot on his hand, severed it on the buzzing saw, discovered too late that he had only removed a symptom, and had not eliminated the poison. It was not simply the hand that bore the disease. It streamed in the blood. "The leprosy lies deep within."

There is not a faculty in us but was originally Divine; and not by its destruction, but by its restoration to its primal purpose, can peace come to these warring appetites. Redemption, not destruction, is our nature's law.

2. *Restraint.* It is thus that we keep wild animals in zoological gardens and menageries. We restrain them with fences, caves, iron cages, and chains. But who of us, when looking at the magnificent creatures in the Bronx Gardens, does not feel what a pity that we must keep them thus, and think how much more beautiful would they be in their native freedom?

So these wild animals of the soul must be held in restraint. "I keep under my body," said Paul. He says this not alone of those appetites which we call depraved, but of his entire being. He kept everything strictly to the one supreme purpose of his life, to preach the gospel.

So every part of our being must be brought sternly into subjection to the law of right; not alone those that we ordinarily call bad—such as temper, sloth, impatience, greed—but those that look toward the holy. Even the so-called good may run wild. In the natural world, domestic dogs, fowls, horses, if left to do as they please, will become a nuisance to us, and will themselves soon degenerate. So of our virtues: they need to be cultivated, sometimes stimulated, oftentimes restrained, always kept within the bounds of law. "Bringing every thought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ." Restraint is not the ideal, but it is better far than license.

3. *Restoration.* If all that we could say to you who are distressed by this anarchy of soul, was, that your only hope is either in destruction or restraint of the conflicting forces in you, I would preach a poor gospel indeed. But there is a better way; namely, the Divine renewal of your nature by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

What broke the harmony of the natural world in which God had originally made it, was sin; and harmony can be restored only by the removal of that sin. Hence our despair. The Ethiopian can not change his skin, nor the leopard his spots. We

may try education; but we have learned that education, so far from washing our guilt away, oftentimes only inflames it. We may try refinement; but that is trying to restore the broken harp by varnishing its strings. We may try courts and prisons; but, alas! they restrain, without curing crime.

After all that has been suggested by the world to remove the prevalent distress, this is the cry of the awakened heart, "Behold I was conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity." Into our despair comes a Savior. Jesus saves us from our sin. This he does by cleansing out its virus, and imparting the Divine element of life. Both are essential for our recovery.

(a) *Cleansing.* Mysterious indeed, both in origin and in character, is this dreadful thing that has come into human history, we call *sin.* In our metaphysics we are divided into three schools. One teaches that sin is an evil projected into us from without, as fever-germs are taken into the blood by what we eat and drink and breathe. A second school declares that sin is simply the natural process of decay that follows the withdrawal of life. A third would have us believe that it is not an evil at all, but a part of the mysterious process of the evolution of a soul on its way to perfection. This

third view is revolting to us who sit at the feet of prophets and apostles to learn the truth as it is in Jesus. It is shocking for us to hear that "the brothel and the saloon are steps heavenward;" that "profanity and obscenity are the groans of travail rather than death;" that falsehood and theft and greed are "virtues in disguise." Moreover, our observation is that no people have ever risen from a lower to a higher character except when influenced by a loftier force from without. Until apprehended from above, the human course has ever been downward. "The seeds of sin grow up for *death.*"

As to the other schools we have named, we have no contention with them. However sin came, it is unclean. The filthy microbes that fever and devour the heart are these: "Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, lasciviousness, wickedness, deceit, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." What a brood of foul and vicious things is this that comes trooping from the dark caverns of the human heart! No washing of the parched lips or bathing of the hot brow can cleanse this breeding-place of all iniquity, or quench the hot flame of this Gehenna of the heart, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

"No outward forms can make us clean,
The leprosy lies deep within."

The Hebrew intuition, trained as it was in the doctrine of sin, clearly perceived this feature of the filthiness of sin. Hence its frequent symbolic ablutions. Baptism meant to the Jew, as it does to us, the washing of guilt from the soul. Paul's vivid description of the course of sin is supported, not only in the history before his time, but in after years as well: "Given over to all uncleanness." History and our conscience both proclaim that sin is filthiness. And it has bacteria fecundity, multiplying itself with astonishing speed. Some philosopher has said that it would take a thousand years to evolute an English gentleman from a Celtic peasant. He could have added that only a few years of physical excesses are required to involute an English gentleman into an idiotic debauchee.

Our sin-befouled hearts can be recovered only by a thorough cleansing. Happily for us, Christ can do it. "He is able to save unto the uttermost." He cleanses partly by *the word*: "Now are ye clean through the word I have spoken unto you;" partly by *the blood:* "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" partly by *the Spirit:* "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." The word, the blood, the Spirit—truth,

love, life—these are the cleansing streams that "wash the dismal stains away."

(b) *Impartation.* Christ not only cleanses the sinful heart,—he also restores its lost life: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins."

We do not believe that those who teach that sin is the decay which follows the withdrawal of life have told the whole story. Nevertheless it is true that when a soul is dead in sin, there follow results similar to those that come to every other thing that has lost its life. The power of the unity of the organism is broken, the elements war with each other, and dissolution takes place. It is the ancient curse of sin, "Unto dust thou shalt return."

What a sad sight is a dead tree which once was a thing of beauty, the proud monarch of the plain, but now stands lone, leafless, with withered and broken branches, holding the foul nest of carrion birds! Sadder still is a human corpse, with its doom of "corruption." But what so sad as a soul, destined by its Creator to unfold imperial powers in the infinities and eternities, cleaving to the dust, and enslaved by the things it ought to rule!

It is not only sad, it is perilous. When other things die, that is practically the end of them. In a

little while all that they once were, melts away into the great All. But a soul continues to live when the divine part is withdrawn. It lives while it is dead. It seeks through the flesh the gratification of an appetite, which only the food from above could appease. It bites the dust. But this world "can never give the bliss for which we sigh." Hence our excesses. In no department of desire does man come to a place where he can say, "It is enough." The soul drives the appetites and every faculty far beyond the bounds which nature had set for them. This unnatural excess must end in ruin. The glutton is sure, sooner or later, to find himself where Dante found his friend Ciacco, in the third circle of Inferno, "submerged in sickening mire, filth-begrimed and battered with rain eternal, maledict, and cold and heavy." And so of every faculty. Driven to unnatural excess by the soul's vast want, it becomes a flood of base desire, and sweeps down to hopeless wreck, reason, love, character, and every noble thing. O, brothers, why drink at the deadly sewers when the streams of living waters are so near?

"Weary souls that wander wide
From the central point of bliss,
Turn to Jesus crucified;
Fly to those dear wounds of his:
Sink into the purple flood;
Rise into the life of God."

4. I have but a few words on *the influence of man's restoration on nature's disorder, of which our text speaks.*

The Scriptures teach that what disturbed the order of this natural world was the fall of him who had been given dominion over all that God had made. "Cursed is the ground for man's sake." Whatever may be the cause, it is certainly the fact that nature has combated every step of our struggle for life. Storms, earthquakes, floods, pestilences, wild beasts, vermin, weeds, and briers have impeded our way; and its powers, when captive, often break their bonds with destructive violence.

It is also highly probable that this order of things we call Nature is radically changing. Sir William Crookes, at a recent congress of chemists in Berlin, said that everything is rapidly dissolving and degenerating into the original protyle; and that the universe is lapsing back to primeval chaos. And in this he is supported by the eminent astronomer, Sir Norman Lockyer, who, in his spectroscopic studies, became convinced that the sun and stars were changing from certain chemical elements into others. The inference of final dissolution is strongly disputed by other chemists; but there can be hardly a question of the ultimate transformation of nature. The

former things are passing away. Nature is hurrying on to a new heaven and a new earth. Thus the most recent science is guessing at what the New Testament prophecy clearly proclaims. The Scriptures furthermore teach that our dominion in nature is to be recovered in Christ. Our Lord explains his own power by, "I seek not my own, but the will of my Father which is in heaven;" and, "The works that I do, I do not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

And this is true of us all, that as far as we come into God's will in reference to his creatures, they yield a willing obedience. We are in possession of many instances in which wild beasts and birds have recognized certain men as their natural protectors, and yielded themselves to them in perfect confidence. Thomas Hughes names some that have come under his own observation, and then refers us to the historic cases, such as the authority which the hermits of the Thebaid had over the wild animals of the desert; he refers to Cowper and his hares; Waterton and the birds; Thoreau and the squirrels and fish. His explanation is doubtless the true one, that all these, unconsciously but still faithfully, followed God's mind in their dealings with his creatures, and so have stood in true relations to them all.

And what is true of animals, is true of all things in the realm of nature. Emerson says, "That as the earth was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so it ever is to just so much of his attributes as we bring to it." An American electrician of note has recently said that, if ions can be separated from atoms, and re-collected, the manufacture of precious metals and even new elements, such as the recent *radium* with its all but supernatural qualities, is feasible. All that is needed is to know its law, which the Creator has put upon it, and accord with it.

Then there is no physical reason why the city of God with gates of pearl, shall not come down on earth. This is what will be when the spirit of Christ fills us all. Everything in nature will feel the touch of the heavenly fingers, and all discord will cease, and the entire material sphere thrill with heaven's harmony. "Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven."

III.

HE DIED FOR ME.

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that we should live together with him."—1 Thess. v, 9, 10.

THE two greatest mysteries of the gospel of our salvation, unfathomed and unfathomable by the human mind, are the incarnation and the cross. Yet these two facts, the personal Divinity of Christ and his atoning work, are the chief columns which support the dome of our temple. Many a blind Samson has thrown his giant strength against them, but, unlike the house of Dagon, its arches are not fallen. Nor do we have any fear of that catastrophe; for they rest on the pillars of eternal truth. Our danger, however, is that we who love the gospel may come to regard these central verities as vagaries imported to us from out of the metaphysics of ancient cloisters, and altogether inadequate for the practical mind of our time. Without open rejection,

it is possible for us to neglect them, and so come, as many do, into a faith in which these cardinal doctrines have entirely disappeared.

Just so sure as we do that, we have surrendered all. Then Christianity has become, as Lerminier says, "One of the days of humanity; merely a stage in the onward march of the world's progress, which can not fail to be followed, sooner or later, by another." To this sage statement Godet adds a warning: "You thereby open the door to that 'other' whom the carnal heart of man demands, and whom Jesus foretold in these words: 'I am come in the name of my Father, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.' An ominous saying, pregnant with a dark future." Because of this constant danger, Jesus left us a memorial ordinance, in which these two things are kept ever before our minds: "Do this in remembrance of me;" "This is my blood which was shed for you." That is a fatal hour in the history of a soul when it is unable to say, "He died for me." But who speaks it from his heart, even though it be with trembling, has already come into life. "For God hath appointed him to salvation."

My purpose in this meditation is not to review the many theories of the atonement, nor to express

a preference for any one. This would surely lead us into obscurities which would probably darken the fact itself, and provoke troubled doubt. The secret of the atonement, if ever discovered, will certainly not be by intellectual processes, but by the spirit's intuitions. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. He will show them his covenant." It is the fact rather than the theory that we would have brought to our hearts. And my object is first to state, for those who accept the Bible as the guide to their faith, a few things which may help to establish the fact in their minds; and then, secondly, to note the bearing of that fact on our life: "That we should live together with him."

I. CHRIST'S DEATH IS THE GOD-APPOINTED METHOD BY WHICH WE WHO ARE UNDER THE CURSE OF DEATH COME INTO THE JOY AND VICTORY OF LIFE.

Theologians have for many ages described Christ's death as a vicarious sacrifice. Notwithstanding the fact that the word *vicarious* does not occur in the Scriptures and has a strong theological flavor, we retain it in common use because it expresses with such accuracy the real character of the event of Calvary. A vicarious act is an act done in another's stead. Thus the Pope of Rome calls

himself Christ's vicar, believing, as he does, that he is set to act in his place. Thus the vicar or viceroy of a realm is one who acts in the stead of the king, and his reign is virtually the reign of the king himself. Our physicians speak of vicarious organs in the human body, meaning, by them, organs which do the work others were set to do.

This certainly is the way in which the death of Christ is presented to us by himself: "Even as the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. xx, 28.) The word *for* in this passage is the Greek particle *anti,* "instead of." By this, Jesus asserts that his death was not like that of a martyr or patriot, who lays down his life for his Church or his country. He died not merely for the benefit of others, but in their stead. It was the one great event which was the supreme purpose of his coming, to lay down his life, "a ransom," the payment of a redemption price for our life. Whatever theory of the atonement we may accept, it will be fatally defective unless it includes this one essential fact, that the life of guilty souls is secured by the death of the innocent One.

"Our sins on Christ were laid;
He bore the mighty load:
Our ramsom price he fully paid
In groans and tears and blood."

1. *This fact is written on every page of Scripture.* To eliminate the atonement from the Bible would be like drawing the blood from the human body,—you have left a lifeless thing. The blood-thought streams through every part of the sacred Word.

Away on the frontiers of Bible story we read of the acceptable bleeding sacrifice: "And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." (Gen. iv, 3-5.)

Do we ask why God accepted the offering of Abel and rejected that of Cain, we have the answer partly in Gen. v, 7: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." If Cain was sinless, he had nothing to fear. But if he was guilty, the offering for his sin was the animal that couched at his door. Read this passage in connection with that of Heb. xi, 4, "By faith Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than that of Cain," etc., and its meaning is clear. Abel's sacrifice was accepted because it was an offer-

ing of faith—faith in the great fact that God had announced at the fall; namely, that in the fullness of time "the seed of the woman" should, by his own suffering, recover the fallen race. Abel's faith rested on this divinely-appointed offering; and his sacrifice of blood only imaged and anticipated it. Cain, on the other hand, would rest his faith on his personal achievements. He brought the fruits of his toil. Abel and Cain represent the two diverse doctrines of the world and the Church,—recovery by my work; recovery by God's gift. In the Bible story we find Noah and Abraham and Job, and all the patriarchs offering sacrifices in this same faith which gave distinctive character to that of Abel; a blood offering anticipating the one which God himself was to make.

When God gave his people a sacrifice prior to their departure from Egypt, it was that of the Passover, which had, as its chief meaning for the hopeful fugitives, safety under the blood. And when he gave his people a nationality, he confirmed what was already a fact, and guarded and unfolded more fully, in an elaborate ritual, the old-time meaning. I need not attempt a detailed review of the Levitical sacrifices. In all that historic system three things appear:

(1) It all centered in the offerings for sin; and its meaning as a whole was expiation by the blood of the offering. When he who brought his gift to the altar, stood at last in the outer court of the temple and saw the smoke of the sacrifice ascending to the heavens, the one thought that filled his heart was this: on that altar lie my sins, atoned for by the offering.

(2) A second fact concerning that system was that God did not delight in sacrifices for their own sake. They were a means to an end. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. xv, 22.) "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psa. li, 16, 17.)

(3) A third fact is, that all the bloody sacrifices had their consummation in Jesus: "But if we walk in the light," says St. John, "the blood of his Son Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Ephesians i, 7: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins; according to the riches of

his grace." Ephesians ii, 13: "But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." 1 Peter i, 18, 19: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." Rev. i, 5: "Who washed us from our sins in his blood." Rev. v, 9: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Rom. v, 9: "Being justified by his blood." Galatians i, 4: "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this evil world." Hebrews i, 3: "When he had by himself purged our sins." 1 Peter ii, 24: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree; that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." 1 John iii, 5: "He was manifested to take away our sins." Rev. i, 5: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God."

I can not conceive how one who takes the Scriptures for his thought can escape this wondrous blood line. It is the chief thing in the patriarchal faith; it is the central idea of the entire temple service which was avowedly symbolic and prophetic; and it is the supreme doctrine of the New Testament.

Thus the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is filled with the blood thought, and to take it out is to destroy the Book itself. It was once my privilege to examine for several hours the markings in the Bible of one of our most effective evangelists. They were made with such intelligence as to open doors into the secret chambers of God's thinking, and to lift up windows from out of which came the rich music of his voice. But of all the many meanings that came to me by this inarticulate interpretation, none so powerfully impressed me as this fact which I am trying to give to you; namely, that the one great utterance of the Holy Bible is *salvation of guilty men by the death of Jesus Christ.* This evangelist had gone through his Book many times, coloring crimson every passage in which mention was made of blood with a religious significance. Then wherever any fact was stated which depended directly upon the truth of the blood sacrifices, he underlined the leading word with a heavy red line, and connected it with the central truth by a finer line. It is astonishing how crimson those pages were; how those lines threaded every part, like arteries and veins; how they all centered in the altar of Calvary; how every truth seemed to be secondary and subsidiary to this central one—our life by Christ's

death! Remove the crimson fountain and its streams, and you have no Bible left.

2. *The principle of life by death is written on every page of nature.* There are those who would relegate the study of this law of vicarious sacrifice to those who delight in metaphysical speculation, but believe it unworthy the consideration of those who pursue "the scientific method." But we have only to open our eyes to see this law confronting us everywhere in the entire visible world. It is not only taught us by authority in the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but in every meal. Every article of food on your table was once a living thing, and is now dead that you may live. I can not refrain from quoting Frederick William Robertson's strong illustrations of this mysterious and fearful law of all being, which, as he says, so penetrates and pervades all nature as that its elimination would cause nature itself to cease:

"The mountain must have its surface rusted into putresence and become dead soil before the herb can grow. The destruction of the mineral is the life of the vegetable. Again the same process begins. The 'corn of wheat dies,' and out of death more abundant life is born. Out of the soil in which deciduous leaves are buried, the young tree shoots

vigorously, and strikes its roots deep down into the realm of decay and death. Upon the life of the vegetable world, the myriad forms of higher life sustain themselves—still the same law: the sacrifice of life to give life. Further still: have we never pondered over that mystery of nature—the dove struck down by the hawk, the deer trembling beneath the stroke of the lion, the winged fish falling into the jaws of the dolphin? It is the solemn law of vicarious sacrifice again."

Many will remember the conversation of Ruth and David in the farmer's cellar, which Dr. Holland sings in "Bitter Sweet," a poem quivering with the spirit of this great truth:

"Life evermore is fed by death,
In earth and sea and sky;
And that a rose may breathe its breath
Something must die.

Earth is a sepulcher of flowers,
Whose vitalizing mold
Through boundless transmutation towers
In green and gold.

The falcon preys upon the finch,
The finch upon the fly,
And naught will lose the hunger pinch,
But death's wild cry.

The milk-haired heifer's life must pass
That it may fill your own,
As passed the sweet life of the grass
She fed upon."

Nor is there any elevation of life, no higher life, but by suffering and death:

"The native orchard's fairest trees,
Wild springing on the hill,
Bear no such precious fruits as these,
And never will,
Till ax and saw and pruning knife
Cut from them every bough,
And they receive a gentler life
Than crowns them now.

And Nature's children evermore,
Though grown to stately stature,
Must bear the fruit their father's bore—
The fruits of Nature,—
Till every thrifty vine is made
The shoulder of a scion,
Cut from the budding trees that shade
The hill of Zion."

The august voice of this great principle is heard everywhere, where the world takes an upward step, in the groans of suffering that come from the real leaders. Brierley has recently directed our attention to a fact of history which we have frequently noted, that prisons are apt to get as their occupants two classes of persons, the best and the worst. The reason he gives is, that these two alike have set themselves against the recognized public opinion of their country. But there is a deeper reason than that for this singular fellowship of the very best and the

very worst of our race. It is the law of life wrought into the order of the universe as is the law of gravitation. He who would lift a burden from off his fellows must share it. Would you wash out the filth from the places of wickedness? Then you must drink their woe without sharing their guilt. You must make your grave with the wicked because you have done no violence and carried no deceit in your mouth. You can not be a world's savior in any measure without hanging on a malefactor's cross in the midst of the others who merited the punishment. The human race has climbed upwards on the slain bodies of its martyrs. Our religious liberty was purchased for us by those great spirits, of whom the world was not worthy. Our national independence was secured for us by the blood of our forefathers.

Even science makes its advances by patient suffering and voluntary sacrifice. If the laboratory, the inquisition, the ices of the pole, could tell their story, it would surely give no uncertain utterance of this principle of vicarious sacrifice. As science opens out to us its mysteries, we find this same principle reaching down into the infinitesimals. Put the corolla of the geranium which adorns your table, under the microscope, and you are amazed at the exquisite colors and lines, too delicate to be seen

by the unaided eye. Use a more powerful lens, and you find in the heart of that beauty a many-eyed and many-clawed parasite destroying the life of the flower to feed its own. Take a still stronger lens, and on that living insect is another of a different kind, feeding on the first. A stronger glass discovers a third thing of life sucking out that of the second. How much farther this fact continues, only he can guess whose researches have enabled him to see off on that line of mystery where the material melts away into the immaterial, just a mass of quivering life. Out of the death of the universe emerges life.

Is it difficult for us to believe that this principle, which is everywhere in nature, continues in the higher sphere of spirit, and that the consummate man gives us its consummate illustration?—He died for me.

3. *The principle is written on every page of history.* Every historic religion has its altar and its system of sacrifice. We have seen those old stone structures on which that weird priestly order of the Druids offered their sacrifices in the gloomy recesses of the deeply-shaded oak-groves. Rude altar forms of the Aztec people are still extant in Mexico. We are familiar with the sacrifices of Persia, Egypt,

Greece, Rome, and Israel. But, in addition to these, we are told that the far-off Mongols and Tartars and Africans, and more obscure races, have left abundant remnants of their religion of blood. And this sacrificial system reaches as far back as the historian has been able to cast his eye. We have read it on almost the first page of Scripture, where it is named as a fact already established. As far back as we can trace any people, we can not get beyond the altar and the smell of the burning sacrifice.

Amid manifold diversities in doctrine and method, our antiquarians have found among all people and in all ages a threefold agreement as to their sacrifices:

(1) They were made with the purpose of saving the offerer from impending wrath. It has been mentioned as a very suggestive fact that every religion that has not its root in the soil of revelation, regards its God as angry. Hardwick tells us that in Egypt, where the people had a peculiar reluctance to shedding of blood, they themselves trusted by piacular offerings to avert the wrath of their hostile deities. This was the culminating thought of the Egyptian altar, to appease wrath by blood.

(2) The offerings must be the very choicest.

The selections of the flock must be immaculate. On the most momentous occasions, when the most efficient offerings were demanded, they felt that the blood of animals could not take away sins, and therefore they often made a sacrifice of human beings. The story of Themistocles offering up the three Persians just before the battle of Salamis, and that of the multitudes whom Augustus and Sextus Pontus sacrificed to save the nation, are matters of history.

(3.) The sacrifice of the innocent was required to save the guilty. Classic legends abound with pathetic stories of such offerings. Every schoolboy has felt his sympathies moved by the story of Erectheus offering his beautiful daughter to the gods before proceeding to the Eleusinian wars. Who has not grieved over the sad story of Agamemnon surrendering his lovely Iphigenia to Diana?

However we may explain the origin of this universal idea of sacrifice, its essential unity in the three particulars we have named, convinces us that it belongs to the nature of man, and truthfully expresses his need. Taking this fact in connection with those we have previously named, we have no difficulty in accepting the cross as completing all

that is meant in the long and dreadful history of the soul's search for the washing away of its guilt.

"In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

4. *It is written on the face of the cross itself.* The character of Christ's death is such as to be utterly inexplicable excepting on the supposition that he was making his soul an offering for sin.

Those who have devoutly studied the details of the story of Christ's death have been profoundly impressed with two things: First, that it was one of indescribable woe, from which his whole being revolted as from the curse of God. His soul was filled with an unbearable sorrow. He sought to escape the very thing he had come to Jerusalem so bravely to do. He prayed the Father to withdraw the cup. He who heretofore had been so strong to bear every grief was now so overcome as to fall down upon the ground in anguish that brought a sweat of blood. He was filled with awful apprehension. "He was heard in that he feared," says the evangelist. He groaned and wept; and at one time it seemed as if he had lost all sense of the

Divine favor, and cried out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Other men usually hang upon the cross from two to six or more days before they are relieved by death; but Jesus hung there but six hours. Such was his anguish as to force the conviction that some other cause than the ordinary effects of the crucifixion hastened his death. It is possible, as many able scholars think, that he died at last of a literal broken heart. Never, in all the records of death, have we seen anything to approach that of Jesus in black despair and unutterable woe. Paul in his dungeon was triumphant: "I am ready to be offered." Peter when sentenced to crucifixion, cried, "Let me be crucified with my head down; for I am not worthy to die as did my Lord." A gentle woman went to the flames of the martyr's stake with the triumphant cry, "This is the day that crowns are distributed." Even the penitent thief, comforted by the promise of Jesus, dies in peace. But the Son of God is utterly broken in that dread hour.

Place by the side of that fact this second one, that he is the one person of all who have gone the way of death, whom we would have expected to die in triumph. He was here for the very purpose,

as he had said, to give his life a ransom for many. This was the culminating point of God's eternal scheme for the redemption of the lost world; the sublimest hour of all time. His whole heart had been given to the finishing of the task. He knew that shortly he would be with the Father and the world redeemed. In the face of these facts explain his cross if you can. There is but one thing that makes it even rational, not to say divine: He died for us.

Thus we have seen the redemption principle of the cross engraved on the pages of Scripture, Nature, History, and on the rocks of Golgotha. When to this we add the facts of the exceptional personality of Jesus, and the resistless might of his influence through all subsequent time, we are sure that his death was something more than an event of his time. It was the event of eternity, and has vital bearings upon the entire universe; for, as Hausrath admirably says, "The history of the ideal can not be an isolated and particular fact; its contents are absolute; it has an eternal value which does not belong to a given moment, but to the whole of mankind." Every man should recognize in such a history a mystery of grace consummated also for him.

II. Having established in our minds the fact of Christ's vicarious death, without making any attempt to explain its contents, let us rapidly note the practical bearings of that fact on our personal divine life: "That we should live together with him."

1. *It awakens the conscience to a sense of the infinite horror of sin.* There are other ways in which we can learn sin's malignity. When we see individuals and whole communities, diseased in body, degenerate in mind, and wallowing in sickening rottenness of decaying souls, we are horrified. But if that were all, it would be possible for us to regard it as a dreadful consequence of some natural cause, to be healed by wise, economic methods. When, in addition to that, we find that generous men who set themselves to cleansing these foul places, are despised and tormented by those whom they would deliver, and finally succumb victims to the very pest they seek to remove, we are shocked by the perversity of evil. Still our feeling may be the farthest removed from any sense of personal guilt.

Paul tells us of how God would create in the hearts of his people the sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin by the proclamation of the law. In that law we see how widely we are removed from

holiness. But the apostle furthermore tells us of the effects of its proclamation. First, it created a feeling of despair, for no man could measure up to its requirements; and, secondly, it produced a violent rebound from its impossible demands; and out of these came an easy-going fatalism, which was not at all helpful to a holy life. Thus the law-method did not save.

Our fathers sought to deepen the sense of sin in the popular mind by preaching the wrath of God, the terrors of the judgment, and the woes of the damned. From this method there was sure to come a powerful reaction; for unless carefully guarded, it carries with it two fatal defects: it measures the malignity of sin by its consequences, and reckons salvation to be escape from penalty. That is certainly a very superficial view. Hell does not make sin what it is, any more than the gallows makes murder, murder. Merely to escape the eternal fires is not to come into the life of God.

Doubtless all these methods of viewing sin have their value; but there is no intuition of its character so true as that we have in the vision of the cross. When I know that He who hangs on that cursed tree between those malefactors is the Son of the Eternal God, who came from the glory he had with

the Father, for the express purpose of bearing our sins and suffering our curse, then my heart is filled with great fear. How dreadful is my sin which can be sponged out only by the blood of God's own Son!

2. *It assures us of the absolute certainty of our salvation; for it is wrought of God.* In every other form of religion it is the worshiper himself who erects his altar; and the object of his sacrifice is to appease the wrath of his deity. He is never sure that his god is satisfied. But our God has himself provided the Lamb for our sacrifice. The cross is not our arm reaching out after God, but God's own arm reaching down into the depths of our sin for us. We can not emphasize too strongly the fact that Christ is the gift of God: "He *gave* his only begotten Son." The word, as indicated in the context, expresses a gift carried to the extreme limit of sacrifice: "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." This gift of immeasurable love is the warrant and proof that nothing will be left undone that infinite wisdom and power can do, to complete our redemption: "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Thus the cross means the positive surety of our salvation: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. *It is the secret and source of our participation with him in his life.* "He died for us that we should live together with him." When we contemplate the cross, with the spirit of receptivity *(faith,* if you prefer the word), three things occur. Two I have named: a revolt of soul from the horrible sin which required that sacrifice; and a glorious assurance that its stains are wiped away by God's own hand. Then we are in a condition of absorbed attention in which the very life of Christ comes into our being, reproducing himself in us. Paul states it with wonderful accuracy: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

It is an experience so far removed from the natural as to make it all but impossible to find an adequate image. One has tried to illustrate it by reference to the power of the sunlight to imprint the human face upon the sensitized plate, and to multiply its lineaments in a thousand copies, facsimiles of their prototype. But the illustration is not adequate; for not only is Christ's image imprinted there, but his actual life is communicated.

He lives again in us. Our life henceforth is not

merely a life *like* his, but his very own, carrying with it in potentiality all that is his, and making it possible for even us to become, like him, sons of God. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

IV.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF PARDON.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."—Psa. xxxii, 1, 2.

THIS is one of the most joyful strains from the Hebrew Psalter. Its music is that of silver bells ringing merrily into the noise of clapping hands and the pattering feet of holy dance.

There is some doubt whether the word *blessed* is an adjective or a noun; but it is certainly plural in its form, and is rendered by many of our best commentators "O the happinesses!" The psalm begins with this joyful shout twice repeated, "O the happinesses!" "O the happinesses!" And this exultant strain continues throughout the entire song, closing with the ecstatic cry, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." And yet the psalm stands in immediate connection with one of the sad-

dest (the fifty-first), which is the groaning of a soul in the anguish of guilt. Both are historically connected with the same event—David's awful sin. One is the song of penitence; the other is the song of pardon.

The psalm, however, is not simply the outburst of David's joy, as though he were alone and singular in it, but was sung purposely for those who, like the sinning king, have suffered the ache of tormenting guilt. Notice the title, *Maschil.* It means *instruction.* David put his experience in immortal verse expressly to teach fallen men that they need not despair. By the grace of pardon, joy will come again to the sin-burdened soul. And that is the service that this psalm has rendered in history. Luther pronounced it one of the four most precious in the entire book, "Because," said he, "it teaches that pardon of sin comes without the law, to the man who believes." The dying St. Augustine had it written on the wall of the room where he lay, that it might be constantly before his eyes. Paul, in writing to the Jewish Christians in Rome, enforces the doctrine of justification by faith, by quoting these verses. The Jew seeking pardon on the great day of atonement, chanted this psalm.

Is there any one who knows the bitterness of a

great sin, and fears that he can never be perfectly happy again, let him be instructed. There is a great joy possible for even him. The silver bells may make melody in his heart. "O the happinesses!"

I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF PARDON IS THREEFOLD, as suggested by the triple expression of the text, "Whose transgression is forgiven;" "Whose sin is covered;" "To whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.

Here are three different terms to express three different aspects or consequences of our wrong,—*transgression,* or antagonism to God, by which we are alienated from him; *sin,* or a deflection from the true line of our life, and so a spoiling of our history; *iniquity,* or guilt, the effect of our wrong on our own spirit, affecting memory, conscience, and all our sensibilities. Pardon recovers us on all these sides. It restores us to God's favor. It rights the course of our broken lives. It lifts from the spirit the burden of its intolerable load. Let us look at this threefold happiness in particular.

1. *It restores us to God's favor.* Sin alienates the soul and God. This is a statement so often made from the pulpit as to invite the charge of a

platitude. But it is not spoken from the sacred desk alone. It is proclaimed with ominous emphasis in the sinner's own breast. One can not at the same time live in sin and be at peace with God. The sinner dislikes God; he purposely turns his thoughts away from him, and tries to forget him. Or he is afraid of him, and, like the sinner of Eden, tries to hide from him. Or he affects to despise him. He blasphemes his holy name. He questions his existence, and believes hard things of him. In short, he is God's enemy. "You were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." (Col. i, 21.)

But let not the sinner deceive himself with the belief that the enmity is all on his side. There is a common sentiment existing among us which greatly weakens the gravity of the consequences of our sin; which is, that while it makes us hostile to God, it leaves him our Friend. Not so does the Scripture represent the case. While it proclaims the love of God, it also tells of his wrath: "God is angry with the wicked every day." Paul, in Romans v, 10, speaks of *enemies* reconciled by the death of Christ, where the word describes the relation of God to us, rather than our relation to God. There is a dread and awful sense in which God is the sinner's enemy.

We could easily quote passage after passage in confirmation of this terrible fact, which these modern days would veil. But this self-blinding is of no avail. "Out of Christ our God is a consuming fire."

Of course, when we speak of the wrath of God, we are to dissociate it from all those defilements which usually attach to this sentiment in human beings; such as burning passion, unreasoning irritation, or personal resentment. But when these defects are eliminated, there remains an element divine, which is as sublime as it is awful. It is the revolt of infinite holiness from everything that is unholy, the antipathy of good for evil. It is inflexible justice which can not suffer wrong.

And this makes pardon no easy thing. For God to forgive out of his great love, without exacting any conditions, would be for him to be unjust. It would be for him to destroy the order of the universe, which he has arranged in infinite wisdom for the good of all his creatures. Right is defined to be "the order among all things which results from their very nature. Divine justice is the guardian of this order, and consequently the guarantee of the existence of right in the universe." In our National Government the pardoning power is vested in the Executive. This is said to be done,

partly, because of the impossibility of shaping a law which will in every case express exact justice. It is a sad thing when the judiciary, fettered by the statute, is compelled to give decisions which injure that fine sense of justice which is innate in the human breast. Then, too, both the lawmakers and the judges are fallible, and it is a wise provision for meeting certain exigencies that the Executive, by his own will, can override the sentence of the court and remit the penalty it has pronounced. Yet wise as this arrangement is, it is a perilous thing to exercise the pardoning power too freely. Suppose our governor, impelled by mighty love, should pardon all the criminals in our State. It would jar the machinery of government, and endanger the very foundations of society.

But God's law has no defects. Its decisions are invariably just; and for God to forgive wrong without conditions would be for him to destroy right, and to disorder the universe. It is no easy thing to forgive sin. The hardest question ever put is, "How can man be just with God?" But while God is just, his name is Love; and out of the depths of infinite wisdom, Love has found a way by which he can "be just and the justifier of them that believe." This is the mystery of the CROSS. "At that

time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Eph. ii, 12-16.)

This is what Paul states with such concentrated wisdom in Rom. iii, 24-26—a passage which Godet calls "the marrow of theology," and which Calvin says is the most profound statement in the Scriptures, of the righteousness of God in Christ: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Here the phrase "to declare his righteousness" occurs twice. The context will not suffer us to understand by these words "to manifest God's character." If that were what the apostle were emphasizing so strongly, he had other terms at his command which he was continually using in the epistle, to express its manifold excellence; such as *goodness, faithfulness, grace, holiness.* It is a legal phrase, and means the pronouncement of acquittal.

Paul here describes the administrative act of the Judge of all, by which he remits the penalty of sin, and so places the sinner in relation to his government exactly as though the sin had never been committed. The law can never again arrest the criminal for the crime from which the court of pardons has released him. In this sense the pardoned sinner is

> "Free from the law, O happy condition!
> Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;
> Cursed by the law, and bruised by the fall,
> Grace hath redeemed us once for all."

While this is the fundamental element in pardon which God declares, there are two others so closely related to it as to be inseparable from it. The first is, that the act of pardon is not only a legal but a righteous act. As we have already said, to justify

the guilty is itself injustice; and it is only by the cross that God can be both "just *and* the justifier" of them that believe.

That means not only that a holy God *may* take believing penitents into his favor, but that he *must* do so. He can not be righteous and do otherwise. If the penitent is depressed with the sense of his guilt, and fears that God may withhold his favor, let him bear in mind that the tragedy of Calvary gives him the *right* of pardon. His hope is not alone in God's mercy, but in his justice as well. "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." It is a pity that our sense of God's righteousness is not as true as was the old Hebrew's who made such joyful appeals to the judgment. "The throne of his judgment" was not to them a thought of terror. It meant *vindication* by his perfect holiness. They pleaded his righteousness; we plead his mercy. But our salvation stands as truly in one as in the other.

The other thing included in this feature of God's pardon, is *forgiveness*. The two terms are commonly used interchangeably; but there is a difference. Pardon is the act of the officer, and is administrative; forgiveness is the act of the indi-

vidual, and is personal. The one adjusts the offender to the government; the other adjusts him to the person.

Now, sin is not only a violation of heaven's law, but is also an offense to God; and reconciliation is not completed when the penalty is remitted. Loving relations must be restored. We have known those who were once close friends, hopelessly estranged, even after the law had adjusted their contentions. It is not so in our relations to God. Pardon includes forgiveness. God is no longer our enemy. Our sin is treated as though it were not, so far as it effects our relation to him. Notice the terms. He takes it away—*forgiven.* He hides it out of his sight—*covers.* He blots it from his book —*imputeth not.* How the Scriptures wrestle with language to show how utterly obliterated from God's mind is the sin which is pardoned: "Forgotten;" "cast into the sea;" "blotted out as a thick cloud;" "removed as far as the east from the west."

"O, the happinesses" of the pardoned man! He is set right with God.

2. *A second feature of our sin is, it enters into and mars our history.* As the word in our text indicates, the sinner *misses the mark.* His life is spoilt. A second happiness of pardon is, that *God,*

by his mighty power, so transmutes it, as out of great wrong to bring good.

In making this point we must guard against a misapprehension. No repentance and pardon can recall an act that is once done, nor put the actor in the place he would have held had he never sinned. Every sin becomes a curse that goes into history. Nothing can recover it; for nature is merciless and never forgives. Pardon will not recover the murdered man nor restore the innocence of a spoiled home. It is best never to have sinned. Innocence alone is strength. That is a false doctrine and very hurtful which teaches that sin is a necessary stage through which a finite being must pass toward moral perfection.

But while that is true, the sinner need not despair; for it is also true that our God can convert even wrong into good. There are passages of Scripture that plainly tell of a complete eradication of sin from the heart: "white as snow;" "washed robes;" "without spot or blemish;" "unblamable." The fall of Adam seemed to defeat the Divine plan. But while centuries of sorrow have followed the great catastrophe, yet note the good that has come of it,—the revelation of redeeming love, and the reconciliation of angels. Has not Peter's sin, which

seemed to have hopelessly ruined his life, greatly helped him to "strengthen the brethren?" He only echoed a common feeling who said, "I have gotten vastly more help from the blunders of the saints than from all their excellencies." This dreadful sin of David, which brought such misery to himself and his country, has been turned into a blessing for the world. Caldwell truly says, "The story of David's sin told with tears of grief, and the story of God's free pardon told with tears of joy, have brought light and consolation to many a heart which otherwise would have been consumed with despair." My sinning brother, your life is not necessarily spoiled. Be happy. How? "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. lv, 7.)

3. *A third happiness of the pardoned sinner is the lifting of the oppressive sense of guilt from off his spirit.* A forgiven man is not a wretched man. Into the depths of his grief God comes with such compassion and revelation of himself as to make the sinner feel that he is almost willing to have gone into the deeps to have such a contact with God. Said a recovered penitent, "By the measure of the

pit from which he has lifted me, do I measure the love which has redeemed me." How like the woman of Magdala of whom Jesus said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." (Luke vii, 47.)

II. TO WHOM COMES THE JOY OF PARDON?

David himself replies out of his happy experience. It comes to him who confesses: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." That is the essential rule of the Gospel before the Gospel times. Long after David, John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." (1 John i, 9.)

1. *The true penitent does not hide his sin from himself.* There is a reckless way which many of us have in acknowledging our transgressions, which indicates the utter shallowness of the feeling that prompted it. It is the smart of pride, or the dread of exposure, rather than the awful sense of sin. It cries like the big, unkingly Saul, "I have played the fool exceedingly." That is a shallow form of regret which calls its sin only a folly. It bears no more

resemblance to penitence than profanity bears to prayer. The shallowness of such regrets is seen in the fact that we return again to the sin we regret. But when the deep sense of sin comes upon us, it haunts the soul like a specter; it turns the joys of life into bitterness, and fills the future with dread apprehension. Then, there is no attempt at self-deception, for silence is torment. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." In this pain of conscious guilt, the genuine penitent takes no comfort in veiling his wrong behind sweet names. He no longer makes excuses, nor tries to forget his sin in other things. "My sin is ever before me."

2. *He takes his sins to God.* "I acknowledge my sin unto thee." This is needful for relief; for even the instinct of nature cries, "Make a clean breast of it." The man who continues in an unconfessed wrong is ever apprehensive, as though the universe were against him. And it certainly is, for nature is God's instrument. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

All sin is against God; and a good indication of

true penitence is that it feels the God-bearings of wrong-doing. Men commonly measure the enormity of their sins by their effects on themselves or their fellows Murder is wrong, because it robs another of his life; theft and falsehood are wrong, because of the harm they bring to the community. And so of all sins: their enormity is fixed by the magnitude of their results in society.

Not so does the Word of God view sin. It is a transgression of the law of God. It is a personal affront; and its penalty is not only natural, but judicial. To God then must it be confessed; and from him alone can come acquittal. And so the happiness of forgiveness is something more than mere pardon, which is simply an administrative act by which penalty is remitted; it is the joy of God's personal act by which he reinstates the offender in his favor, and restores loving relations which the sin had broken.

O, the happiness! With all the wrongs of the past wiped out, with the dread of the future all removed, with the blessed sense of restored fellowship with God, well may we "be glad in the Lord and shout for joy."

V.

LIFE BY FAITH.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath eternal life: and shall not come into the judgment, for he is passed from death into life."—John v, 24 (New Version).

WHAT our Savior teaches us here with this tremendous threefold emphasis, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," is, that eternal life is not merely a thing of the hereafter, into which we enter when we die, but a thing of the present, into which we enter when we believe. Notice the tenses: *heareth, believeth, hath, is passed.* There is, indeed, one verb in the future tense; but that carries our thought away on to the judgment-day, the condemnation of which we will escape because of the prior fact of having passed out of death into life. The way of life is not the grave, but the cross.

With this fact in mind, let us inquire as to two things:

I. THE MEANING OF THIS FAMILIAR, BUT COMMONLY-MISUNDERSTOOD EXPRESSION, "ETERNAL LIFE."

II. HOW WE MAY COME INTO IT.

I am, then, first of all, to attempt to give some definite conception of the New Testament significance of this profound mystery, eternal life. But where shall I begin to lay my little line to measure that, the very name of which suggests the immeasurable?

1. I confess at the very start that I am not able to tell the meaning of the word *life* in its simplest and most obvious sense. Nor do I believe the man exists who can. We are familiar with the laborious efforts the scholars in the schools of physical science and metaphysical theology have made to shape some sort of a definition of the word. But the very ablest attempts are confessed failures. Its meaning refuses to be caught in speech. It has been likened to the goddess Isis, whose veil may not be lifted by mortal hand.

And yet there is perhaps nothing which we know so well. It is the first affirmation of consciousness, the primal fact on which all our after knowledge is built. I live. If I know not that, there is nothing

at all that I do know. The light has gone out, and all things have disappeared in darkness. But no man questions the certainty of this first truth of consciousness. In every part of our complex being we have the constant and unmistakable certainty of *life*. Place your finger on your wrist and find your pulse. There is the steady beating of the stream of life,—*life physical,* a mystery unfathomable, but a fact asserted in all our sensations and organic activities.

Look a little deeper, and you find a movement of another kind. There are mind-throbs. Thoughts follow thoughts on and on, away beyond the bounds of our material being. It is *life intellectual.* Look deeper still, and you find movements essentially different from those we have named; movements too large to be described by the pulsing of the arteries. They come like tidal-waves that originate in some far-off Infinite; that follow the wake of some heavenly movement; that dash along the shores of life's history, and then roll on and on, back into the Infinite again. It is *life spiritual.* Then look about you, and you see multiplied activities which we can describe by no better term than this one, which we are unable to define, *life.* There is family life, social life, political life, educational life, the life of

morals, science, religion. Surely, if there is a thing which we do know, it is this mystery of life.

We feel justified, then, in proceeding with our study, even without a definition of that of which we speak.

2. *When Jesus came, he took this undefined word and put into it meanings larger than it ever carried before:* so that it became a brand-new word in history. Hence the apostle speaking of it in after days, said, "Christ has brought life to light in the gospel."

This larger meaning of the word we are able to state in a single sentence; aye, in a single word. But we do not believe that that is the better way to bring its divine significance to our hearts. We are so apt to blind ourselves with familiar terms, mistaking familiarity with the sound for an understanding of the living truth it bears; just as children think they know a man when they are told his name. Let us, then, take a few instances in which the great Teacher uses the word in its new meaning, and gather its significance directly from his lips.

When the young man came running to Jesus, asking, "Master, what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments." Plainly

Jesus meant something more than simple life; for the young man might live, in that sense, even while he failed to keep the commandments. Jesus meant a life conforming to the Divine type—a life of obedience, holiness. God's law, by obeying which we live, is not a set of rules which he has arbitrarily laid on us to regulate our conduct, and which he might have made different if he had so willed. There is nothing arbitrary in the moral law. It is what it is of necessity, and could not have been made otherwise. Its basis is God's own character. Hence every law is the expression of some feature in the character of Him who is infinite in his holiness. To keep his commandments is to become like God. Hence the life of obedience is the life of holiness. Having said this, Jesus made the young man realize that perfect obedience could not stand in the will alone, but must proceed from the heart. God is love; and he who loves, lives. Thus Jesus taught that the path to life is love that issues into holy living.

Take a second instance. Jesus says, "He that followeth after me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." What he teaches here is, that the man who is guided by him in all the walks of life shall constantly discern vital truth.

What we see depends on what we are. Character is the eye that sees. This text is parallel to the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Light is spiritual vision. Life is holiness of heart. "The light of life" is the vision of a clean heart.

From these and similar passages, in which the New Testament abounds, it is evident that whatever else may be meant by the term *life*, this is an essential part of its meaning. It means existence in its fullest health—holiness.

There are grades of life. First, there is the physical. This we have in common with the animal. We eat and drink and luxuriate like beasts. Then, there is the life intellectual and moral. This is vastly fuller than the first, though it may not be so long. Hence the force of the oft-quoted sentiment—

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial."

Did not Paul live more in less than sixty years than Methuselah in nearly a thousand? The true way to measure life is not by its length, but by its fullness. The fullest life of all is that into which he comes whose spirit, the divine organ in

him, is quickened into consciousness and activity. The spiritual, or conscious God-life, lifts its possessors into a sphere of being as far above the intellectual and moral as this latter is above the physical. Sensation—thoughts—divinity. This is the order. This last is that of which our Savior speaks when he says, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye may have it more abundantly."

3. *This fullness of life,* or holiness, is the impartation of the very life of God, hence is sometimes called the God-life.

I believe that now it is commonly conceded that there is no life without parentage; that is to say, that life comes only of life. I know that there are those who are investigating off on the frontiers of science, where physics merge into the mysteries of metaphysics, who are not so certain of the genesis of life. But until these scholars come from their studies with something more than the stammerings of a guess, and are in better agreement among themselves, we will continue to hold to what seem to be the plain statements of the Word of God, and are the common facts of our own observation. Life comes only of life. If we would get grain out of the field, we must put living grains into it. Not by chemistry, but by vegetation, come our harvests.

Not only so, but every different kind of life produces its own, and not another kind. An oak will not grow an apple, nor an apple an elm. Each plant bears fruit "whose seed is in itself, after its kind." And that principle which holds in all the lower kinds of life, holds in all the higher. A man is born, not of an animal, but of human parents. "Life never overleaps the limits traced for it in the original creation." A son of God must be born of God. "But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." This fullest life is ours by that Divine generation by which God communicates to us his own nature.

A mystery? Yes. So it is also a mystery how you are the projection of your parents' life, a separate personality in the universe. I stand confounded in the presence I name. I name it, however, not to explain it, but to emphasize the fact. This holiness which Jesus calls life, emanates from the very person of God. It is his very life. We call it Spirit. It comes as a quickening power. A bold thinker, in speaking of this mystery, says, "There takes place, in the believer by the power of the Holy

Spirit, an effect similar to that which produced the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ." Certain it is that Christ is formed within us by this communication of his life. He is multiplied in believers. We are all the sons of God by faith in Jesus.

4. *This Divine life is called eternal,* because it is the same in kind as that life which He lives whose existence covers eternity. We usually understand by the eternal life, life perpetuated forever, its endlessness being its distinctive feature. But that is certainly not its meaning here. That life can be affirmed of the unbeliever as of the believer. The godless man will live as long as the godly. And if by the eternal life we understand the endless life, we have lost the distinction which Paul would make in "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." Does he mean to teach that the life of the godless ceases with death?

Furthermore, this is an utter misuse of words. What is eternity? Eternity is duration without beginning or end. It covers not only the infinite future, but also the infinite past. It is "from everlasting to everlasting." Consequently, there is but one being whose existence can be said to cover eternity: the uncreatable and incorruptible Spirit—God. "I

am the high and lofty ONE which inhabiteth eternity." So when we speak of eternal life, we do not mean a life which, when once begun, will never cease. We mean the life that God lives. Its distinguishing feature is not its endlessness, but its Divinity. To partake of the eternal life is to partake of those Divine energies that inhere in the character of Deity; such as right, purity, truth, peace, joy, holiness, love. These are the elements of eternal life. To perpetuate anything forever which does not belong to the character of him who lives in eternity, is not to make it eternal. Suppose you take the opposite of those virtues I have just named—hatred, wrong, falsehood, strife, uncleanness, deviltry—and then add to them everlastingness; will that make eternal life? That is, rather, endless death. Nor would it make anything else Divine to perpetuate it forever. Your earth-life, however pleasant it may be, if continued through eternity, would become death. How we deceive ourselves in this particular, imagining that the present good without alloy, would be Heaven, if it could continue forever.

I once heard a loving mother say of her beautiful babe, who was shaking his tinkling rattle and prattling with inexpressible sweetness, "Mamma, mamma;" "O, if I could only keep him baby for-

ever!" It was a foolish wish. Imagine forty years rolled around, and that mother with her wish granted, herself an aged women, and her forty-year-old baby on her lap, swinging his rattle and crying, "Mamma, mamma!" Infancy perpetuated into manhood is idiocy. The mother got her wish, and she got a fool. So earth-life, however sweet it may be now, if perpetuated into eternity, would be hell. Time-life without end is not eternity.

But if we have the things that are true, and honest, and just, and lovely, and pure, and of good report, we have the things that are as old as God and as ceaselessly new. They were before the morning stars sang together, and will be when the heavens are rolled together as a scroll and the elements are consumed with fervent heat. To have them is to have the very power of the eternal. Hence I say that the eternal life is more than a thing of the future. It is a present possession. It is the new life that we have when we are born of the Spirit and become the sons of God.

5. *This life has the promise and certainty of everlasting continuance,* just as the unseen life which streams in the tree is the promise of golden fruit. If the vital force in the peach-tree were conscious of itself and understood its own nature, it

would in all its progress have this confidence, that, excluding the possibility of a blight, it must produce peaches. That is the very essence of its being, the peach-producing power. At every lower stage of its growth, it would say: "This is not all. The life in me asserts and assures something beyond. Only when I come into the fruit is my destiny complete."

Now, this new life we have in God *is* the conscious life. The man who has the love of God in his heart knows it. One such asserted, "I have risen out of the darkness of doubt, and walk in the light of a day where God is ever light." Another, speaking of the transcendent facts of life and immortality, states his faith and the ground of it thus: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." So we all who live in Christ have, according to the measure of our spiritual vitality, such a consciousness of indestructible life as makes us positive of immortality. I will not say that such a man is conscious of immortality, for consciousness is cognizant only of present acts and states; but this I do say, that the new life is constantly increasing in fullness and power as it grows older. Aye, even when the body

is breaking down and the mind grows feeble, this God-life increases in strength. "Though the outward man perisheth, the inward man is renewed day by day." He is conscious of possessing a deathless principle, which banishes the very thought of death and decay. It is "the power of an endless life."

II. HOW MAY WE COME INTO THE LIFE ETERNAL?

Two things:

1. *"He that heareth my word."* The simple acceptance of Christ's word on the testimony of God is the sole condition of this inestimable blessing. Do that, and all is done. The promise is not *shall* have, but *hath* eternal life. At once you can say with Paul, "The life I now live, I live by faith of the Son of God."

The ground of our faith in Jesus is God's testimony. Our Redeemer would impress upon his hearers the fact that God in whom they believed indorsed him. They might refuse to accept his own witness of himself. They might even reject John the Baptist's testimony. "But I have a greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent

me, hath borne witness of me. . . . Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

So I would say to you who long for eternal life, search the record that ye may learn what God himself says about it. His word is that that life is *in Christ*. He imparts it to us in him.

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John v, 9-13.)

There, brothers, is the rock of your faith; not your experiences, or your feelings, or even your holiness; but Christ, the gift of the Father. God's Word is surer than all things else besides.

2. "*Believeth on him that sent me.*" Having heard the record of the Divine method of salvation, the only thing for us to do is to accept it.

The trouble with many of us is, we complicate God's method of life by numberless devices of our own,—sacrifices, penances, prayers, and many a thing which, good in itself, is only a rotting timber when made the ground of our hope. It is a fatal thing when we transfer our faith from what Christ is, to what we have done or are doing even in his name. What is the gospel but this, that God has wrought for us a finished salvation, which is offered us as his own free gift on the simple condition of our accepting it? What saves me? The fact that I have gone through certain emotional changes, or attained certain virtues? Verily not; but this: Christ has died for me. Christ is my life; his work, his death, his intercession.

"Not all our groans and tears,
Nor works which we have done,
Nor vows, nor promises, nor prayers,
Can e'er for sin atone.

High lifted on the cross
The spotless Victim dies;
This is salvation's only source;
Hence all our hopes arise."

VI.

THE INWARD REAL.

"He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly."—Rom. ii, 28, 29.

THIS is Paul's way of asserting the great principle that it is not the outward but the inward qualifications that make the man. The Jew had the idea that the only divine manhood acceptable to God was the Jew. Hence he who would come into the Divine favor must become one of the chosen race. Not to be a Jew was to be excluded from all the mysteries of the great salvation.

Let us note the points of difference between the outward and the inward Jew. It will aid our vision of the essential elements of the Christian life.

I. THE OUTWARD JEW IS ONE WHO IS BORN OF THE CHOSEN RACE.

He has Abrahamic blood in his veins. That makes him a Jew. The inward Jew is one who has

the faith, the consecration, the holy purpose of Abraham. It is not the ancient blood, but the ancient character that makes the real Jew.

Unfortunately, our Hebrew brethren have, to their great distress, overlooked this fact, which seems to us so self-evident. We once asked an eminent Jewish lawyer, who had discarded about everything essentially Jewish, but still clung tenaciously to his race, why he did not abandon that also, and dissolve his national idiosyncrasy in the common humanity. He replied with feeling: "We have a pure blood, unmixed by other strains, older by thousands of years than the royalties of history. If there be anything in ancient blood, we have the best." He kept the casket, but lost the gems.

1. *The outward is not to be despised.* It is no idle thing to have behind us generations of noble men, whose achievements we inherit. It is no vain thing to be the heirs of an immeasurable past, to be born in a country like ours, where the temple of liberty stands built inch by inch by the slow toil of mighty men, who suffered and sacrificed for the joy of after generations.

A noble pedigree is a priceless possession. It is not an empty boast to be able to say, "I am an Anglo-Saxon and not a Mongolian." Where one is born

and bred is more than a mere incident. It means an immeasurable difference both in endowment and in opportunity, whether we were born in this great Republic, or among the savages of Africa; in a refined and historic family, or among the degenerates in the lowest slums. But the one thing of supreme value, towering over all mere external advantage, is the inward. The genius of Isaac Watts flashed a mighty truth when he replied to the English lord, who, seeing the little, pale-faced poet for the first time, thoughtlessly ejaculated his surprise aloud, "Is this the great Watts?" Watts, laying his slender fingers on the breast of the stalwart lord, improvised these familiar lines:

"Were I so tall to reach the pole,
Or grasp the ocean in my span,
I must be measured by my soul:
The mind's the measure of the man.

So God measures men. When Samuel, impressed by the personal presence of Eliab, said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me," the Lord corrected him: "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." And that is our intuition.

You are introduced to a man of great fame, a splendid history, a fine presence. But some one whispers in your ear, "He is false and treacherous;" and your hero is degraded in your eyes. Here is a woman as beautiful as Récamier, as intellectual as Madam de Staël, as imperial as Catherine de Medici, as magnificent in her attire as Marie Antoinette; but she is unclean, and we shrink from her as from a leper. Character is the peerless thing.

2. *Character is not the product of the outward.* Men have argued that it is. Give, they say, a favorable birth and a favoring environment, and you will have the finest result. Heredity and endowment are the secret of character.

For some time past we have been listening with wondering hearts to scholars of the materialistic school who have explained the stupendous occurrences in the physical world by certain immutable mechanical laws, such as type, environment, selection, and classification. And certain priests of God's house, fascinated by this new learning, have come into the sanctuary with this gospel: that spiritual law is only the natural projected into the realm of souls. Just as fire results from carbon brought into union with oxygen at a given temperature, so mentality and spirituality are mechanical

resultants of certain antecedents, such as birth and circumstance. To be holy, we must be born of good blood and be bred in the authorized ceremonies. That is only the modern way of putting the old Jewish contention, born of the flesh and of water. But we are glad to know that the more recent philosophy has vacated this notion of a self-running, self-executing Nature. It is pronounced a fiction of unclear and superficial thinking. Nature is the outcome of law and *purpose*. Its phenomena are unexplained and inexplainable except by the presence of an infinite wisdom and will. But whatever metaphysical philosophy may have to say, for us who are unable to explore that realm, the voice of history is clear and unmistakable. Many a man, born of royal blood and bred in a palace, has been most ignoble. Fools have been born of scholars, and trained amid books. On the other hand, many of the most imperial intellects and master forces of the world have come from the most unpromising environment. Give us, if you can, the ancestry of Lincoln, Grant, Cromwell, Garibaldi. Whence came the apostles and the prophets and the greatest of the reformers? Out of Nazareth came the greatest of the sons of women. Spirituality is vital and original. It is a flame kindled by the fire from above.

II. THE OUTWARD JEW IS ONE WHOSE TEMPLE IS HIS CHURCH, and the minute observance of its service is his religion. The inward Jew is one who can not be bound by temple walls, nor his duty be circumscribed by fixed forms. His life is in the truth that is symbolized rather than in the symbol.

1. *Mark the difference.* The outward Jew, clothed in the garments of sanctity, mounts the steps of the splendid porch of the temple. He passes between the massive columns of brass, with their chapiters of network, lily-work, and pomegranates. They mean to him "beauty" and "strength." But beautiful architecture does not make a beautiful church. Hear what God said to Solomon who built the temple: "But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a by-word among all people: and at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord

done thus unto this land, and to this house?" (1 Kings ix, 6-8.)

There stands the great altar. The outward Jew brings his heifers and turtle-doves, and offers them as sacrifices unto God, and believes that his sins are thereby covered. Hear God again: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I can not away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. . . . When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isa. i, 11, sq.)

The inward Jew sees the truth underlying the offering. All things are God's, of which this gift is only the pledge. By God's gift alone can sins be washed away.

2. I have no purpose to combat the doctrine of symbolism. To do so is to combat the very scheme of God. In the temple every object was a symbol. Every column, every stone hewn or unhewn, every apartment, every implement, was fashioned after a pattern which God showed Moses in the holy mount. Everything there was holy.

Symbols attract the eye and awaken the thought, and are effective in uplifting the soul to the Divine Eternal. But there is a double danger in symbolism. First, to limit sacred things to the prescribed forms. Our temptation is to take only those that have been specified and consecrated as imaging authoritatively Divine meanings. God's symbols are not confined to the temple. Everything is a symbol. Flowers, rocks, mountains, stars, everything in nature, by the Divine intent, shows out somewhat of the eternal excellent.

Think you that the golden candlestick is the only holy lamp? You would not care to light a gaming-table with it. That would be sacrilege indeed. But let me tell you that the lamp on your table, the lights in your office, are as truly symbolic of the searching eye of the Holy One or your personal influence as the lamp in the temple.

Artists used to paint holy pictures,—Madonnas

with their feet on the crescent and a star on their brow; crucifixes, aureolas, and other sacred things. Just as holy scenes are painted by modern artists, though not in the same way. Millet's "Angelus" is as holy as Giotto's angels. The modern critic does not overdo it when he says that, "In the Angelus, the perfume of the blossom exhales from the dust; the rich color of the rainbow is revealed in the clod; and more than the splendor of kings is suggested in the pathos of the peasants." Josef Isaak's "Holy Family" is a common Dutch interior. Happy for us when every clerk will see a holy symbolism in his ink and pen; when every farmer will read righteousness in his plow and yoke; when the loom and the hammer, and every implement of toil, will be regarded as just as holy and suggestive as the pot of manna or the ark of the covenant.

A second peril of symbolism is the deification of the form. Frederick W. Robertson, in one of his Tyrolese letters, describes a painting which he saw in Munich, representing a priest and a boy attacked by brigands. The priest holds up to their gaze the host, while the boy lifts a lamp to let the light fall upon it. The robbers cower down and relax their grasp upon their victims, awed by the

mysterious symbols of religion. This is called the triumph of faith. But Robertson, with his keener perception of spiritual verities, says: "I do not call that faith; it is paltry, abject cowardice. There are men who would rob and murder; but because a mystery is held before them which may strike them dead, they tremble and give up the enterprise."

Symbolism is good in so far as it opens to us the Divine real; but when the symbol itself is taken for the real, it is a superstition. It is idolatry.

The artist deplores the wreck of such beautiful structures as Melrose Abbey. But there was more of stalwart faith—aye, of reverence itself—in those old Scottish iconoclasts who would shatter the shackles from the minds of their countrymen, than there was in the most slavish devotee who would kiss the sacred relics there. Truth, purity, goodness, are infinitely holier things than altars, incense, and sacraments. The inward *is,* the outward is *not,* real.

III. THE OUTWARD JEW IS ONE OF PATTERN; THE INWARD IS ONE OF LIFE. The one is mechanical; the other is living and expanding.

I use the word *pattern* because it expresses exactly what I wish to say. The original meaning of

the word is an inanimate master to guide the workmen. It is something cut out, a shape to be copied. If accurately copied, every product will be exactly like the original.

Life never does that. As in the leaves of the forest, while retaining its essential nature, life produces an endless variety of form. It never exactly reproduces what it once made. And what is true in all the lower forms of life, is infinitely more varied in all the higher and more complex forms.

See the pattern Jew. He rises early in the morning, goes out to the corner of the street, and there stands praying. He does so, not because he would have chosen that method of prayer, but because that is the way good men have done before. He comes from the market-place at noon, rolls up his sleeves, and washes his hands. There is no need of his doing so; but that is what holy men always have done, and he wants to be holy too. Occasionally he takes a bowl of water and a hyssop branch, and sprinkles the walls of his house, his clothing, and furniture. He does it because he wishes to have a holy home. It does not occur to him that to make a holy home he must be patient, and gentle, and reverent, and cultivate the inward virtues; but, imitating the fathers, he would purify his home by

ceremonial sprinkling. A neighbor has lost a friend. It is a trial for him to do so, but he must follow the copy. So he goes to the house of mourning, throws off his sandals at the door, enters the room, seats himself upon the floor, sprinkles ashes on his head, wraps sackcloth about his shoulders, and wails as if suffering. He has all the ancient form, but lacks the reality of a mourner. His garments fit the pattern, and he thinks himself holy. This external conventionalism may deceive others and even ourselves. Ecclesiastical proprieties, the venerated speech of the saints, the songs of the holy men of old, the voice and gesture of sanctity, will do for us what cosmetics, rouge, the pencil, may do for a plain face,—give it a glow of beauty which, *at a distance,* is easily mistaken for the loveliness of genuine nature.

It is even more difficult to distinguish the strict formalist from the genuine saint. But there is one point of nature which I have just named which is unmistakable. With the same glowing life, it will never be exactly like any of the former products. There is an individualism in the spiritual life which makes each particular star shine with a glory all its own. See the formalist with his gifts. They are measured by a rule of arithmetic. Holy charity

goes by machinery. That is the way Judas would do it; and while he exactly calculates how far money will go toward feeding the poor, he can plan to sell his Lord. But Mary, ignoring all precedents and impelled by the might of her love, does a new thing, which proves to be better than she knew. There is no rule of righteousness so safe as ardent love for Jesus.

Our charities, done by a mechanical rule, are often as cruel as a thrust with a goad. But charity impelled by genuine love is as fragrant as a rose. I read the other day a story of Amard Bucher, the world-renowned violinist. On the steps of a public building in Florence, an old, disabled soldier sat playing a violin. By his side stood a faithful dog holding in his mouth the veteran's hat, into which, now and then, a passer-by would drop a coin. A gentleman, in passing, paused, and asked for the violin; first tuning it, he then began to play. The sight of a well-dressed man, playing a violin in such a place, and with such associations, attracted the passers-by, and they stopped. The music was so charming that they stood enchanted. The number of contributions largely increased. The hat became so heavy that the dog began to growl. It was emptied, and soon filled again. The company grew

until a great congregation was gathered. The performer played one of the national airs, handed the violin back to its owner, and quickly retired.

There we have the originality of genuine life. The formalist would have given his coin, and left with the feeling "I have done my duty." Bucher did not give a penny, but he broke an alabaster box for the poor old beggar, and so poured the precious ointment on the head of his Lord. And how the odor sweetened the lives of the many who witnessed the act!

There are many who think their lives are stupidly dull; and the dullest thing of all is their religion. It need not be so. Every man's life may be as rich as a romance, as sweet as a symphony; but the secret is to be found first and chiefly in the inward real.

> "The poem hangs on the berry bush,
> When comes the poet's eye,
> And the street is one long masquerade
> When Shakespeare passes by."

It is much more easy to criticise the inward Jew than the outward; for the simple reason that the one is always thinking of the rule by which we measure men, while the other ignores it.

Have you ever seen a brigade of soldiers on

dress parade? Everything was just right there. The equipments were all polished and glittering. The motions were regular and exact. They may have had a fight, but it was a sham fight, a parody of the real. Everything was in order, done by rule. Measured by Hardee's tactics, they were beyond criticism. But some of you have seen a real fight. How was it then? In the smoke and thunder of the battle, did you care how bright your buttons were polished? Did you think whether your coat was dusty or torn? Do you remember how you held your head or moved your feet? Ah! you were an inward soldier then; your heart and brain were at work. You forgot the pattern.

Much fault is found with the men who do not conform to the rule. But how about the life? There is many a well-rounded pattern Christian, so smooth that the rain will roll off him as from the wall of a sepulcher; but the within is full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. There is many a man covered with scars from head to foot. He has stone bruises all over him, which he has received from the conventional morality and the harsh judgments of men. His has been a fearful inward conflict, which has started germs of life and wrung from him cries for help from God. Such

were Peter, Paul, Luther, Wesley, and many another. When the outward scars have all healed over by the process of spiritual granulation from within, they will be as pure as the angels.

IV. PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES WE HAVE REVIEWED.

1. *He who cultivates the inward, cultivates the Divine original in which he was made.* He is *himself,* and not a copy of some one else. As the stars in glory, God made human souls all different. But conventional life would spoil this diversity by crowding us all in a fixed mold. It would have us all dress alike, and talk alike, and act alike, and think alike. Modern culture threatens the ruin of individuality. But it need not, if we keep in mind the true relation of the outward to the inward. True culture is finished selfhood.

2. *He whose ideal is the outward, prevents growth. He who aspires for the inward, is ever progressing.* The Scriptures teach that, for those who come into the life of Christ, everything is new; and that that newness is continuously unfolding into something newer still. There is the *new man:* "A new creature in Christ Jesus." (2 Cor. v, 17.) There is a *new life:* "To live in newness of life."

(Rom. vi, 4.) There is a continuously *new career:* "All things new." (Rev. xxi, 5.) There is a *new world:* "All things have become new." (2 Cor. v, 17.) There is a *new destiny:* "New Jerusalem." (Rev. xxi, 2.)

3. *He who has the inward comes into liberty.* There are many who revolt from the religious life as from a tyranny. It is a constant restraint, all law: "Thou shalt not," and "Thou shalt." To them I would say that if your religion is purely an externalism, you are right. Nothing can be more slavish to an unholy man than the law of holiness. It is just so in respect to the law of the State. The man who wants to steal will feel the tyranny of the law against theft. The wretch who went the way of infamy at Auburn protested against the iniquity of a government which would murder him for murdering the President. But the man who has no theft or murder in his heart, sees a holy order in law, and adores it. To him it is a royal law of liberty. So in the realm of art. Give the student the correct rule by which excellence is expressed, and if he has not the thing in his soul, the rule is oppressive. In poetry, how the student groans over trochees and spondees, dactyls and peridactyls, strophes and antistrophes. And when he

writes poetry, it has the resonance of lead. But it is not so when the poetry is in his soul. Then his song rolls out like that of the bird, joyously. It is just so in our moral life. That man is free who comes into a mighty love of the right. The moment his heart is right, so that he knows and loves the will of God, for him "there is no law."

4. *To cultivate the inward is to cultivate the eternal.* The pattern passes away; but the life it enshrines, endures forever. For example, the externalist says: "Go to church twice on the Lord's-day. More is needless, less is sin." "No," says the inward Jew, "be reverent always; worship Him whether in this mountain or that. The time and place are temporary incidents, not enduring essentials."

Now the years are rolling by. In the great conflagration, which must soon consume all material things, temple walls will crumble. Gerizim, Jerusalem, and every holy mount will melt away. We enter upon that deep world where there are no churches. How about your rule, "Go to church twice," etc.? If that is all your worship, you are poor indeed. But he who has cultivated the inward reverence, the spirit of worship, has entered into the temple not made with hands. He has the Eternal.

VII.

UNACHIEVED IDEALS.

"Trophimus have I left at Miletum, sick."—2 Tim. iv, 20.

VERY little is known of Trophimus; but what we do know is all to his credit. He certainly was a man of parts, else the great apostle would not have chosen him for a colleague in one of his missionary journeys.

He was not a Jew, but a Hellenist. He was born at Ephesus, and was reared in the worship of Diana, the presiding divinity of that illustrious city. But while a young man he accepted Christ, and became a most ardent aspirant for a holy and useful life. I can readily imagine how that, in the glowing love of his new life and with his poetic Greek temperament, he builded splendid schemes of wide usefulness. He had before him such conspicuous examples as Barnabas and Silas, Timothy and Titus. Why could he not he one of that goodly company?

For that he hoped, and planned, and prayed; and at last the opportunity came.

Paul recognized his consecration, called him into his service, and permitted him to share with him the toil and sacrifice of his journeys. How Trophimus's heart must have burned within him when he found himself in the daily companionship of this master mind of all time! Now the way is clear for him to do some worthy thing for God and his kingdom in the world.

But the reality disappointed the dream of his consecration. About the only thing he did that is considered worthy of record is, that he was set to collecting money from the Gentile Christians to carry to their poor Hebrew brethren in the Jerusalem Church. Possibly also he, with Titus, carried the Second Epistle of Paul to the Church at Corinth.

He who was so zealous effectively to aid the peerless apostle was really the innocent cause of his arrest and imprisonment. It was his presence at Jerusalem that gave rise to the report that Paul had taken a Gentile into the temple; and that brought on the tumult that resulted in the apostle's imprisonment and his ultimate trial at Rome. Poor Trophimus meant just right; but calamity came of it.

Then later, when Paul was going to Rome and,

as it proved, to his death, Trophimus traveled with him, glad if permitted to do so, to minister to him to the last. But he got no farther than Miletus. There he fell sick, and Paul was compelled to leave him. Then this man's star sank under the horizon, and never appears again.

What a prosy reality to answer his glittering ideal! If he only had been permitted to share in Paul's dungeon, it would have been far more endurable. With the passion of a martyr, it would have been much easier for him to languish in chains for Christ with the sympathy of the whole Christian world turning toward him, than to lie on a sick bed forgotten by everybody but his nurse. O, it would have been a thing sublime to walk to the stake or to bow under the headsman's ax! But how tame to have lingered an invalid for years, and then die bolstered up on pillows, with a physic bottle to his lips! That brief history is a truthful picture of most of us. The marble palace of our dream is only a common hut in the reality. The brilliant prince of our fancy is only an ordinary laborer.

I read the other day an old New England legend. In the early period of the colony a ship was sent out from one of its ports, but never reached its destination. One pleasant summer afternoon, so runs

the story, the people were standing by the sea, and they saw a vessel approach the shore, which they knew, by its build and rigging, to be the missing ship. It drew nearer and nearer till every line was clearly visible; and they even recognized the faces of those on board. "Then suddenly the vision faded, the sails dissolved in cloud, the spars were lost in the mist-lines of the sky, the hull disappeared beneath the waters, the specter bark was no more." That legend has stood as the image of disappointed worldly ambitions. But it also images many a holy purpose. Our ideals started out actual ships, manned and equipped, but have dissolved in mists.

There is many a Trophimus among us to-day, who, because of personal infirmity or some equally mean thing, not his sin, lies in despair, looking upon the utter desolation of his holiest schemes. We have a message for such, not to deepen their humiliation, but if possible to lift them completely out of it.

I. YOUR UNACHIEVED IDEAL IS A MARK OF THE LOFTINESS OF THE SOUL THAT CONCEIVED IT.

Though it never came to the actual, it is not a vain thing that it arose; for you are a nobler man for having it.

Do you know whence that vision came? It came out of the very sublimity of your being. It is the outcropping metal which tells how rich is the mountain that has seemed so poor. That largeness of love that conceived a generous gift that you wanted to make, but could not because of your poverty,—it was the love of Christ that enlarged your heart. That scheme of yours that overlooked the years which you will not live to achieve,—it was the power of an endless life that evoked it. That heavenly beauty with which you would remove some of the ugly places of this world,—it was the actual bloom of heaven in you. So far as you can see, the world is no better for your scheme, but *you are*. All that you have dreamed has gone into the making of your eternal being, and you will see it by and by.

Our temptation is to measure our inward self by what we put in the outward, in our speech, in our song, in our deed. That is the way we measure others, and we unwittingly put the same measurement on ourselves. Undoubtedly there is need that we test ourselves frequently in that way, else we fall into the mistake of substituting our dream, that we can not realize, for the commonplace thing that we could do. We have recently read of a man

who, seeing a thirsty pilgrim approaching, thought, "O, if I only could, I would give him a goblet of crystal filled with the juice of the grapes of Eshcol!" But in his inability to do the splendid thing, he failed to give him a cup of water, and lost the "disciple's reward." The sin of the man of "one talent" was not his abuse of his gift, but his failure to use it at all. The man who does not do the simple thing that he *can* do, will not do the splendid thing he thinks he would like to do. But there are those who would do the fine thing, if they could; and it is of those we affirm that their lofty ideal is the measure of their worth.

Our outward limitations do not prove a corresponding littleness of being. Moses was slow of speech, yet was immeasurably taller than the eloquent Aaron. Beethoven could not hear, and the conflict between his genius and his infirmity almost drove this deaf Apollo with his lyre to the desperation of suicide. But what a creator was he! Goethe's saying that "our wishes are presentiments of the capabilities that lie within us, and harbingers of that which we shall be in a condition to perform," may be oversanguine; nevertheless, there is far more truth in it than we who lie on the ruins of our presentiments can believe.

All of us have felt at times that there is absolutely nothing that has been done by others but we too, if similarly environed, could do as well. We certainly find it easy to identify ourselves with the greatest heroes and heroines of history and romance. The loftiest poets seem to sing for us, not *new* songs, but old ones which had been making melody in our soul, but which we had not been able to sing out for others; the reason being our external and accidental deficiencies. How often have we thought, "My harp holds as rich music as the best, but I have not been taught to finger it. I could have been as great a soldier as our nation's hero, only my necessities made me a clerk. I might have been a cardinal, only for an inherited disease."

Just as great Nature breathes into every lily bulb, and makes it throb with a passion for the perfect flower, each particular bulb pulsing with the confidence of all that lily bulbs have ever done or been, so we, in breathing the common life of the race, feel the whole, and are conscious of a capacity for the finest the race has produced. But only a small proportion of lily bulbs are able to realize their dream. Some are neglected by the florist, and so come to naught. Others are eaten by worms; the drought famishes others; the ambition of others

is trodden out under the foot of a careless child. O the careless florist, the worms, the droughts, the cruel feet that crush the soul's sweet dream!

But these things can not destroy the soul's real nobility. They may indeed turn us to a better service than in the way we had planned.

I know a beautiful girl, whose features are as finely cut as a Grecian cameo, who has the form and bearing of a queen, and the ambition of a Lady Macbeth: but she is a factory girl, and lives in a humble cottage on a street black with soot. On one occasion, when a splendid equipage passed, carrying an elegantly-dressed but a plain-featured young woman of about her age, she said, "O, I would make a better duchess than you!" Possibly she was right; but she never *can* be a duchess, and it is all in vain for her to wreck her happiness with useless repining. How much better for her to resolve that, while not a duchess in name, she will be one in reality. Let her take the lofty spirit into the factory and home, and there be noble and imperial. I do not know much about duchesses, excepting as I have seen them in history and romance. But I have come to think of them as quite like the rest of us, very human. And it is quite possible that the only difference between the titled one and the fac-

tory girl is the difference of circumstance. Surely the place is not the sovereign. If it be, then the soul is slavish rather than princely.

Let us believe in our spirit's intuition, and assert our sovereign might wherever we are. A princely spirit can convert a cottage into a palace, and a factory into a field of glory.

"Live your own life as conscience moves,
And heart and brain define you,
Resolved to fill alone the grooves
Your attributes assign you;
Not heeding much, if self approves,
If all the world malign you.

Be brave in purpose, strong in act,
As you and Truth decide it,
Swift in defense, slow in attack,
Then what the issue, 'bide it.
And learn what long the wise have known,
Self-flight alone can hurt you."

II. GOD ACCEPTS THE UNACCOMPLISHED THING YOU PURPOSED, AS A THING ACTUALLY DONE.

I knew a little girl whose parents moved from the city into a country village, where they had spacious grounds. The child asked for a little piece for a garden all her own. She wanted to grow some roses to make papa and mamma happy. All by herself she dug the earth and planted the roots. She watered and weeded the bed, and watched anxiously

the growth of the plants. But in her inexperience, she did not do her work well, and the roses never bloomed. The dear girl's heart was broken when she saw roses blooming elsewhere, and none on the plants she had cultivated so lovingly. I well remember how the hearts of the parents went out for the child; and how they took the loving purpose for the flowers themselves. And her love was all the more precious, just because of the failure of its project. Brothers, your Father knows what you meant; and the love that answers your purpose is as full as if you laid the actual at his feet.

If we could only see as God sees we would be elated by our companionships. Heroes and heroines, princes and priests, prophets and apostles, are all about us, in our community, our Church, our home. We are frequently surprised by some heroic deed done by some one whom we have met every day; only we had never suspected what a man he was. Nor did he dream it himself. Not long ago one of our sailing vessels had suffered a bad break below the water line, and the pumps were not enough to save the ship from sinking. Every effort was made to close the break; but in vain. All seemed hopelessly lost, when a common deck-hand asked them to give him some bagging and let him down to the

fracture. He never came back. Nor was it his purpose to do so. He deliberately corked himself in the hole, and thus prevented the rush of water into the ship. No one had ever thought of making that deck-hand a member of the Legion of Honor. Though unrecognized, his was a heart mighty with the heroism of the cross.

The woodcutters with Lincoln in the Kentucky forests, never suspected that they were working by the side of the tallest spirit of the century. We are jostling up against heroes every day, only we do not recognize them. More difficult still is it for us to recognize the sublime in ourselves. Dr. Watkinson speaks of the unconsciousness of genius, and cites Columbus, who never knew that he discovered America; and Franklin, who never dreamed that his kite was to be a sign in the heavens, betokening a new age. What would Raphael have thought if he had only forseen that one of the poorest of his paintings would sell for half a million dollars? Egotism is never great; at least not in that particular in which it is egotistic. Men usually boast of that in which they are not especially skillful. Genuine strength is commonly unaware of its strength. Goethe was childishly vain of his theory

of colors and his botanical studies, and believed that his name would be remembered in the world because of these, when his "Faust" was forgotten. Leonardo da Vinci was prouder of his flying machine than he was of his immortal "Brera." Sir Walter Scott prized his title as a Scottish lord higher far than he did his "Waverly." Milton believed that his fame would rest secure on his "Areopagitica."

We commonly make our measurement of things and men by the false standard of bulk, success, and the loudness of their report in the world. Carnegie's name is graven on tablets of brass, and universities place literary titles on a commercial man. But the name of the widow with her mite is not sounded by fame's golden trump. Yet that timid woman is, by Christ's measurement, incalculably a greater personality than the multimillionaire. Rome's crown received the plaudits of the world. But how in the roll of the ages does it compare with the crown of thorns?

We can readily believe in the greatness of those whose biographies we read and whose monuments adorn our parks. But let us rest assured that what we believe of them may be equally true of the least of us who have not had their success, but who have

meant as well. The world will not regard our failures; but God sees the real nobility in and behind all sincere effort. We can believe with Tennyson,—

"That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shriveled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain."

III. THE FAILURE OF OUR IDEALS, OUR HOLY AIMS, UNDER GOD'S PROVIDENCE, ONLY HELPS THEM ON.

It is a well-known fact that few men can stand the test of great successes, even in God's own work. How many ministers can we name who were wonderfully useful in upbuilding the Church, till by their very successes they became elated, and turned their very power to harm the flock of God! How many there are who, when in moderate circumstances, were generous, humble, and kind, but when they were prosperous, lost their generosity, and became tyrannous!

Paul himself, when hindered, as he thought, by his infirmity, besought God to remove it. But the "messenger of Satan" was not removed, and the

very humiliation it brought, enlarged the usefulness of the apostle. The infirmity of noble minds is ambition; and were it not for the miserable thorn, the probability is that Paul would have given more of himself and less of Christ to the world. He would have been "exalted above measure," and his name would have shadowed that of his Lord.

Many of us have found ourselves with our hands tied, and have wondered why the omnipotent Father did not release us. The answer is here; we do more for him in our bondage than we possibly could if we were at liberty. Dr. William M. Taylor tells a very suggestive story of the celebrated scientist, Morse. He says that one day Morse went into the studio of the artist, Benjamin West, with whom he was a great favorite. West was then engaged upon his famous picture of "Christ Rejected," and, after carefully examining his visitor's hands, said to him, "Let me tie you with this cord, and place you there, while I paint the hands of the Savior." So he stood still until the work was done, bound as it were in Christ's stead.

O what a privilege it was, even in that way, to represent his Lord! But he was, after all, only a dummy. But you—tied down by infirmities, restrained by circumstances, compelled, like Trophi-

mus, by some mean thing to linger in obscurity and humiliation, while others with whom you started, move on to large usefulness, and possibly to the glory of martyrdom—you are *really* standing with Christ bound. "Here is the patience and faith of the saints." And God keeps you there for the very purpose of enlarging your being, and really of your usefulness. In God's "All Saints' Day" the *unknown* appear. Lowell words a divine fact thus:

"One feast, of holy days the crest,
I, though no Churchman, love to keep,—
All Saints,—the unknown good that rest
In God's still memory folded deep;
The bravely dumb that did their deed,
And scorn to blot it with a name;
Men of the plain heroic breed,
That loved heaven's silence more than fame."

VIII.

THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS.

"Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. —Rev. ii, 1-5.

THE history of the Church at Ephesus is full of vital meanings for the Church of to-day. Because

of their practical value, let us study the three things mentioned in our text concerning that ancient Church.

I. ITS EXCELLENCIES. "I know thy works," etc.
II. ITS DEFECT. "I have somewhat against thee."
III. THE MEANS OF ITS RECOVERY. "Remember," etc.

I. THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS WAS ONE OF THE MOST FAVORED AND ONE OF THE MOST NOTED OF HISTORY.

1. It originated in a little band of disciples of John the Baptist, through the efforts of those godly people, Aquila and Priscilla, who had come to the city in pursuit of their trade, but reckoned it to be their chief business to bear witness of the great salvation they had found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Its first preacher was the eloquent Apollos, a man "mighty in the Scriptures," who afterwards became one of the most famous men in the Church of Christ.

It enjoyed the pastorate of Paul for three years, and ever after received his special care. While a prisoner at Rome, he wrote to it that magnificent epistle which Coleridge calls "the divinest composition of man."

For several years Timothy was its presiding

bishop. It also became the great metropolitan Church, the center of Christian influence. The saintly John made it his home. There he did his best work; namely, the preparation of his "Gospel," and there he died. Never did a Church have a more brilliant beginning. Apollos, Paul, Timothy, and John,—these were the mighty men who laid the foundations of this celebrated Church.

2. In addition to the character of its brilliant founders, there were other facts that helped this Church to greatness. Ephesus was the great commercial city of Asia Minor, as Corinth was of Greece. Ships from all parts of the mercantile world anchored in her river, the Caystrus. Merchants from Achaia, Macedonia, Syria, Rome, and lands far away, met here for purposes of trade. Next to Rome, it was probably, at the time of Paul, the most cosmopolitan city in the world.

We know how foreigners in a city of this character will give attention to things, which in their native towns they would ignore. The spirit of freedom dominates, and curiosity is alert. They, in their leisure hours, wish to see and hear all they can, and return to their native land with the wonderful tales. Men would listen with curiosity to Christian preaching at Ephesus, who at home would cry out

against it, "Heresy, Infidelity, Destroyers of the Gods."

Paul saw at once that there was a grand opportunity to make his influence felt in every land. Hence he wrote to the Corinthians who were pleading for him to come to them again: "I will tarry at Ephesus till Pentecost, for a great door and effectual is opened to me." While the world was coming to him with curious ears, it was not needful for him to tramp the world and force an unwilling hearing. Many a heathen heard the gospel at Ephesus, and returned to his home a glad witness of its power to save. And so, from the very nature of the case, Ephesus became a missionary center.

Opportunities make obligations. The Ephesian Christians must needs send their light out in every direction, or their candlestick would be removed. Appeals for instruction in the new faith came to them from afar. If they had failed to respond, they would have suffered what has come to every other Church and individual who has refused to let his light shine; the flame would have been extinguished.

But Ephesus did respond to its obligations. It was one of the seven golden candlesticks. Many a Christian convert went out to Smyrna and Per-

gamos, and all over Asia Minor as missionaries. They crossed into Macedonia, sailed over the great sea to Africa and to the coast of Italy, with the glad tidings of joy which shall be to all people. And their multiplying obligations only made them labor the more earnestly. The more one does, the more is laid on him to do. Duties never grow less in weight nor fewer in number. But with these Ephesian Christians, there was no burden too heavy for them, nor toil too protracted. Nor were they spasmodic, taking up a work for Christ with zeal and then speedily wearying of it. "I know thy works and thy labor, . . . and thy patience, . . . and thou hast not fainted."

Nor was their work done for selfish motives. Some there are who do even their Christian work for personal reward. They are not always conscious of it; but so often we meet with men who give their labor and money and prayers for the Church of Christ, and then expect applause. And when they fail to receive it, they fret and smart and finally withdraw from their work. "They have done it unto men." It is not godliness, but barter. Such, however, was not the fact at Ephesus. The Spirit says, "I know thy works; . . . for my name's sake thou hast labored."

3. Another feature of the Ephesian Church brought out in these verses is, *it was orthodox.*

The intellectual form of our religious faith, as well as our activity, is largely determined by our outward circumstances. The points in doctrine we most emphasize are those that antagonize the prevailing errors. Thus the great doctrine of the Reformation was, "Salvation is by faith," because the leading doctrinal error was, "Salvation is by works." The great point in the Wesleyan revival was religion is a conscious inner life, to antagonize the prevailing error that religion consisted in a round of ecclesiastical observance. So the great doctrine of our Church in the early history of our country was, "Salvation is free," to antagonize the extreme Calvinism of the time. The loudest cry of Christian consciousness to-day is, "God is love," as against the excessive terror which characterized the preaching of the generation passing away.

Now, Ephesus was the stronghold of heathendom and superstition. It contained one of the grandest temples in the world; a temple which took three hundred years to build, which Strabo calls one of the seven wonders of the world—the great temple of Diana. Christianity was brought in immediate conflict with this superstition right here at its most

intense center. I will not delay to give particulars, but will simply say that here the Christian Church was compelled at once to shape its principles and assert them. Another thing that aided in their orthodoxy was the great corruptors of the faith, who professed the name of Christ, came to Ephesus—those who claimed to be apostles, and those who, like the Nicolaitans, in Jesus' name, justified abominable things. The Church set itself to sifting. It hated heresy, and wherever it found evil in doctrine, cast it out. "I know that thou canst not bear them that are evil: and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars. And thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

Here, then, we have a Church apostolic in its origin, correct in its principles, unselfish in its purposes, abundant in its labors, persevering, strong, one of the brightest of the seven golden candlesticks. Who of us would not say that it was a glorious Church?

But let us hear what the Spirit saith to this Church, and through it to the entire Church that exhibits a similar character: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

II. THE DEFECT OF THE EPHESIAN CHURCH: THE LOSS OF FIRST LOVE.

By this loss of first love, I do not think is meant what we understand by a hopelessly backslidden state. The description we have given is by no means that of a backslidden people. Real backsliders are proverbially worse than they were before conversion. (Matt. xii, 43-45.) The trouble with these Ephesians was not that they had left God, but that they had lost the fervency and power of their early love. Religion had ceased to be in them an inward affection as it was when they first began the religious life. As this is a very common experience, let me name a few of the leading characteristics of a Christian's first love, the loss of which is so perilous.

1. *It is emotional.* Men usually begin the divine life with a great deal of feeling. So far as they are able to interpret it, it is all feeling. A description of early religious experience is a description of feelings. There is the dread sense of sin, the anxious foreboding, the sorrow of repentance, the troubled groping in the dark, the struggle within, the pitiful cry for help. There is a view of the cross and its bleeding victim. Then, whether faith comes slowly or suddenly, there is a breaking in of light upon the

soul with surprising revelation. Then there is a rush of joy, gratitude, peace, love. Sometimes it is overpowering: it laughs, sings, shouts. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing."

Say what we will, a leading feature of first love is emotion. To borrow the apostle's strong adjective, it is "fervent;" that is, burning, hot, boiling. See the young Christian. How his face glows! His eyes sparkle; he is full of zeal, ready to do anything, to bear any cross. I think that our feelings lie closer to the divine side of our nature than any other part of our being. They are deeper than our thoughts, and are therefore first stirred by the movements of the Divine life. The emotional side of our being reaches out, like a promontory, far into the ocean of the Infinite, and is sensitive to the first pulsing of the mighty tide that takes its rise in the presence of God. Why is it that the chorus "Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away," continues to be sung in revival times as it does, only that we remember that early day as remarkable for its happiness?

But men say that it is not in the nature of things for that to last; that feeling must develop into prin-

ciple, emotion must yield to duty. But where can you find that in this great book? It is indeed taught that there must be growth in principle; but nowhere do we find that the glow and fervor of this first love must subside.

Hear Paul: "I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Hear the Spirit to the Church at Laodicea: "So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." In 1 Thess. iii, 1, we read, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love."

Let us not, then, delude ourselves into the belief that a mechanical performance of duty and an intellectual acceptance of the true doctrine is a safe substitute for the glow of genuine feeling.

2. *First love knows no bounds.* There are no limits to its faith or courage or assurance. It claims and believes that it possesses, in one glorious moment, what the ripe Christian has reached only after long years of consecration.

> "Of my Savior possessed,
> I was perfectly blessed,
> As if filled with the fullness of God."

It is as extravagant as the life of Spring, which pours itself out in lavishness of blossom and color

and fragrance, making promises impossible to fulfill in a single season. Should a tree give perfect fruit for every blossom, it would exhaust its vitality and pay the penalty of its excess with its life. Yet that is the way of fresh young life.

It was just so that the new life came to the early Church, with the breath of Pentecost and miraculous powers, and daily conversions in astonishing numbers. Multitudes, under the torrent rush of the new-creating Love, cast all their goods in a common treasury, and confidently expected the immediate coming of the Lord in glory; anticipating at once all that the Lord was preparing for them in the ages to come.

And this we believe is the impulsion of every individual when he comes mightily into the new life. His heart o'erleaps all processes, and is impatient for the finished thing. He gets in a hurry, and is surprised when he finds that neither older Christians whom he urges, nor sinners whom he calls, respond to his glowing enthusiasm. Beautiful it is, like the tree of life in blossom, and fills the earth atmosphere with the sweetness of the eternal. The ideal glory throws its richness into the real. That is an unhappy hour in the history of a loving soul when, after being shocked by its many disappointments,

it suffers the decline of the extravagance of overflowing first love. The apostolic counsel is not, "Let your love be *suppressed* by wisdom and prudence," but, "Let it *abound yet more and more.*"

If, when the apple-tree finds that only a minute proportion of its blossoms comes to the fruit, it should become disheartened and resolve to make no effort at all, it would soon be a lost tree. With the loss of its ideal, it is only a stick. It is high wisdom rather than shallow sentiment for the bride and groom to keep perennial the ideals of their fresh young love, and strive to be true to them in spite of the many prose realities that thrust themselves into their history. Though never realized in fullness, they throw a sweetness and refinement into their lives that otherwise would be lost. Who can read the story of Charles Kingsley's chivalric passion for his wife and question the power of such a love ultimately to make a home actually as sublime as the ideal itself? Suppose it does not all come at once; when the story is finished it is all there, with not a blossom lost. On the stone beneath which husband and wife lie in Eversley Churchyard is this epitaph, "*Amavimus, Amamus, Amamibus.*"

If that be true in all the lower forms of life, it is supremely true in the higher forms. The Chris-

tian must ever have before him the measure of the perfect man in Christ Jesus, and keep ever in his heart the ambition of immediate accomplishment, which is the ideal of first love.

3. *First love is creative.* While it pulses, it can not be confined to fixed modes, but is ever finding some fresh mode of expression. In word, in deed, in song, it has an everlasting newness. Nothing is so transforming. When the love of God first filled our hearts, it not only changed them, but it changed the universe. The sun shone brighter; the firmament of night was a new thing; the very face of the earth was renewed. It made present to our hearts what hereafter will be a fact before our eyes, "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

This is what the Ephesian Christians had lost,—the freshness and creative energy of the early love; and so had settled down in the dull routine of correct dogma and morality, and the dead routine of fixed ceremonial.

III. HOW CAN THIS LOST FIRST LOVE BE RECOVERED?

By three things:

1. *"Remember."* The temper of our age is just the reverse of this injunction. There are many who

believe that the redemption of the race can be secured only by a complete disenthrallment from the ancient thought and habits. We are rapidly losing reverence for the past, and are rushing on to what we believe is a new and glorious future. In the fury of the rapids, we believe that to look back is to be lost.

The spirit of the Church partakes of the temper of the times. There perhaps has never been an age since the candlestick was removed from Ephesus, when the Church was so intensely active as now. It is impatient of old methods and old theories, which it would cast off as rusty shackles. There is doubtless much of genuine truth and life in these new movements; but they have their peril, which can be averted only by habitual and careful retrospection.

The elements that were the potent forces to create the splendors of the present hour, may be so submerged as entirely to escape our view; and for want of attention we forget them. Unless we pause to remember, it is the easiest thing imaginable to mistake the exhilaration of movement for life itself; and only when our vessel lies helpless in the sluggish waters below the rapids, we discover that the fires in the furnace have gone out.

It is a trite saying that the newest is the oldest. He who forgets the old, which is the eternal new, is sure to come into a moldy senility, as deadly as it is stupid. To avoid this perilous deterioration, the first thing to do is to "remember whence thou art fallen."

2. *"Repent."* There is divine wisdom in this call. It does not send us to the use of artificial means to restore lost religious emotions. Many do that. When their love has grown cold, they seek to kindle it anew by resorting to rousing meetings, with sensational methods, and hottest exhortations, seeking through the physical sensibilities to effect an inward experience which is only a counterfeit of the first love. All feeling thus produced is excitement which will have a painful and disastrous reaction. Feeling will not be so easily roused the next time, and finally will cease to respond to our effort altogether. The thing to do is to repent. Come with your guilt to Him who will have compassion on the contrite of heart. Your place of relief is only at the penitent's altar.

3. *"Do thy first works."* The law has been often stated: feeling comes from acts done on principle. What are those "first works?" They are repentance

and faith. That is the way we received Christ at first. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Begin at the beginning and continue there. Despair not. While you continue in works of faith, the candle will burn anew.